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# Barriers to the Implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Robin L. Plumb

May 2004

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Dr. Russell West, Chair

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Keywords: Barriers, Brain Gain 2010, Communication, Distance Learning,  
OneNet, Technology, Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative

## ABSTRACT

### Barriers to the Implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative

by

Robin L. Plumb

The Oklahoma State Legislature and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education have partnered to put forth an initiative to strengthen the state's intellectual power in hopes of preparing its citizens to compete in the global, knowledge-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As a starting point for the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative, the Oklahoma State Regents set forth two goals: (a) to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Oklahoma and (b) to improve Oklahoma's rankings on national economic indicators to achieve a condition in which Oklahoma's growth rate on national economic indicators is consistently above the national average (National Center for Higher Education, 1998).

This descriptive study examined the barriers to implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative and provided research data concerning the learning sites and the response to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Policy. Questions were addressed through focus group interviews with students, faculty, and administrative staff as well as indepth interviews with 14 chief academic officers of the state institutions in the state of Oklahoma. Policies and procedures were examined and participants were asked to respond as to how they functioned and took responsibility for ascertaining and aggressively meeting the educational needs in their respective communities. In serving those needs, these institutions were examined concerning use of the programmatic and course expertise of sister institutions.

Four barriers were identified from the collection and analysis of the data: communication, faculty buy-in, money, and technology. Evident in each barrier was a sense of collaborative effort on the part of students, faculty, administrative staff, and chief academic officers. The initiative represented a collaborative effort on the part of all institutions involved in the study. It appeared that implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative was well underway.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to the memory of my mother who taught me that I could “do all things through Christ Who strengthens me” and to the other members of my family, including my dad, who have stood by me in all my educational efforts; my husband, Greg; my daughters, Tina and Amber; and my grandchildren, Savanah and Jarrett. All of you have supported me, advised me, and loved me through these past few years. It has been a long journey that we have all made together and I could not have reached my goals without you. Thank you for sharing my dreams and helping to make them come true!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been accomplished without the help of many people. I would first like to thank my doctoral committee. I am blessed to have had such a wonderful group of professionals with whom to work. You have all been available and supportive, even from a distance. As my chairperson, Dr. Russell West has encouraged me for many years and my deepest appreciation belongs to him. He has been supportive of me through both my masters and doctoral programs. I am grateful for his continual guidance and understanding.

I am also thankful to the staff at the Ardmore Higher Education Center, especially the library services. Cindy Pollard, Audrey Gastineau, and Amanda Hall--without you, I would never have been able to retrieve books, journals, and documents in such a timely manner. The AHEC library is a jewel and you are all to be commended for your efforts.

I wish to thank Dr. Al Turner and Dr. John Bedford, my friends and colleagues, for serving as my peer examiner and auditor, respectively. Without your guidance and support, this endeavor would not have been possible.

I especially want to thank Marilyn McAdoo, who served as a peer debriefer for this process. Marilyn also traveled with me, listened to me, encouraged me, and provided her full support as I worked my way through the many miles and hours of qualitative research.

I also want to acknowledge the support of my family. My husband, Greg, listened and provided me with much needed confidence to keep going. I am especially grateful to him for the maps he designed for my study. My children, Tina and Amber, supported my endeavors and allowed me to continue even when they needed their mother more than ever. My dad, Pete, provided me with constant love and understanding.

Above all, I wish to thank God. He provided me with daily strength and watched over me. It was with His guidance and assurance that I was able to complete my journey.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (1999) initiated the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative that provided a foundation for the development of a proactive, equitable means of using higher education resources to address unmet higher education needs in communities throughout the state. At a special meeting of the Oklahoma State Regents in August 1997, preliminary discussions focused on the 1998 legislative agenda. The regents' goals included continuation of higher education improvement and state budget funding increases. An additional priority was to develop an understanding with leadership to work with the state's regents on issues relating to higher education changes (Oklahoma State Regents, 1997).

Recognizing that Oklahoma's future prosperity rests more in its intellectual capital than on any other factor, the Oklahoma State Regents developed a long range plan entitled Brain Gain 2010 to build the state's intellectual power and to help move Oklahoma to the top one third of all states for its educational and economic performance (Oklahoma State Regents, 1991). The Brain Gain 2010's objective was for Oklahoma, by the year 2010, to meet or exceed the national average for the proportion of its population aged 25 or older holding associate degrees or higher. National figures show that states with the greatest economic success have the highest percentage of college-educated citizens. Currently, Oklahoma ranks in the bottom one third of all states for the educational attainment of its citizens and, consequently, for its economic performance (Oklahoma State Regents, 1999). The state is not keeping pace with national increases.

To meet and slightly exceed the national average by 2010, Oklahoma will need to double its expected growth rate of college degree holders aged 25 or older. The regents have undertaken a comprehensive strategy to increase the number of Oklahomans who earn a college degree. In addition, they have pledged to work with other state leaders to develop strategies to keep more

Oklahoma graduates in Oklahoma as well as attract college degree holders from outside the state to Oklahoma (Oklahoma State Regents, 1999).

In an analysis conducted by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (1998), it was reported that participation rates of differing populations in Oklahoma revealed significant regional variations. The participation rates were influenced by the kinds of programs available through the local institutions. Demographic projections indicated a shift in Oklahoma's population and an increasing proportion of older, place-bound students. An analysis of the geographic distribution of institutions, branches, and other learning sites revealed that virtually no population center in Oklahoma is more than 30 miles from an existing public institution. The issue facing Oklahoma was not the lack of facilities from which services could be offered; instead, it was the lack of the appropriate services at each site to meet the region's needs (National Center for Higher Education).

The report from The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (1998) warned of future attempts to reserve geographic market areas as being exclusive to local institutions. With the growing capability of in-state and out-of-state institutions to use electronic course delivery to penetrate virtually any geographic area, institutions were likely to fail. According to Jones, as cited in National Center for Higher Education Management Systems' report, the state system must plan for higher education delivery that responds effectively to the changing mix in the geographic location, age, race, and origin of Oklahoma's population. Recommendations contained in the Citizens Commission report and in the Technology 2000 report call for the state regents to change their policies, to use the new technology tools, and otherwise take steps to meet the changing needs of Oklahoma citizens (as cited in National Center for Higher Education Management Systems). A systematic and equitable process was needed to meet community needs for higher education services.

By resolution adopted on October 21, 1997, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (1997) set forth the following principles regarding higher education service sites:

1. A coordinated community request: Communities, whether they are cities, counties, towns, school districts, or some aggregation thereof, must make their requests within the service areas designated by the regions and must provide a coordinated needs request to the state's regents.
2. Local commitment: Communities must submit to the state's regents evidence of ability to establish and maintain the site for a higher education service location.
3. Higher education service sites must be:
  - a. Student focused. Higher education services will be focused on the higher education needs of the community. Courses and programs may be brought from multiple institutions on a one-time, cyclical, or continuing basis to meet the community's higher education needs.
  - b. Locally controlled. Communities or businesses will provide and maintain the site for receiving higher education services and will determine the needs and identify higher education providers consistent with the state regents' guidelines and final approval.
4. Minimize administrative cost: The state will partner with communities in making an investment in program delivery.
5. State of the art services: The state's regents through state colleges and universities will provide quality, tailored academic courses and programs electronically or through off-campus delivery from one or more institutions. (n. p.)

### *Statement of the Problem*

The Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative and the goal of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education is to increase the participation rates of first-time freshmen and of part-time students in all regions of the state to the 1997 statewide averages by the year 2010 (Oklahoma State Regents, 1999). The regents intend to accomplish this goal by making maximum use of existing academic assets, by making them readily accessible to all residents of the state through the use of technology and other means, and by avoiding the possible creation of new academic capacity and the construction of additional educational sites and related facilities (Oklahoma State Regents). As a starting point for the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative, the Oklahoma State Regents set forth two goals: (a) to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Oklahoma, and (b) to improve Oklahoma's rankings on national economic indicators to achieve a condition

in which Oklahoma's growth rate on national economic indicators is consistently above the national average (National Center for Higher Education, 1998).

This descriptive study examined the implementation policies of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative and provided research data concerning the learning sites as they responded to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education Policy. Policies and procedures were examined and participants were asked to respond as to how they functioned and took responsibility for ascertaining and aggressively meeting the educational needs in their respective communities. In serving those needs, these institutions were examined concerning use of the programmatic and course expertise of sister institutions.

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceivable barriers to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative across five community colleges, five regional universities, a comprehensive university, the two higher education centers, and the University Learning Center in Ponca City, Oklahoma. This study examined the barriers that chief academic officers and stakeholders such as students, faculty, and administrative staff encountered with implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative.

### *Research Questions*

The primary research question addressed in this study was:

1. What are the perceivable barriers to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?

Additional research questions included:

2. What are the perceptions of the chief academic officers on traditional staffing when trying to deliver programs to learning sites?
3. How has intercollegiate competition been impacted?
4. How were faculty members involved in decision making for each school?

5. Have administrative support services (registering students, collecting tuition and fees, providing bookstore services/distributing learning materials) and student support services been provided for each learning site? If so, who is responsible for them?
6. How has the Learning Site Initiative impacted the relationships between regional universities that may be in the same geographic service area?
7. At the institutional level, who plans for program review policies and decides whether the institution should consider collaborating with other institutions to develop joint programs, courses, or modules for both distance and on-campus delivery?
8. Who is accountable for the scrutiny and academic standards and outcomes?
9. What kinds of incentives are offered to both the receiving site and the institution that is providing the courses?

These questions were addressed through focus group interviews with students, faculty, and administrative staff as well as indepth interviews with 14 chief academic officers of the state institutions in the state of Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education created a policy environment that placed less emphasis on institutional oversight and more emphasis on the use of incentives for institutions to be involved in creating and implementing a public agenda for higher education in Oklahoma (National Center for Higher Education, 1998). In order to implement these strategies, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education modified its policies to reflect the following seven orientations:

1. Designation of initial learning sites
2. Policy regarding service areas--responsibility sites
3. Policy regarding multiple sites in the same geographic area
4. Program review and approval
5. Planning
6. Accountability
7. Fiscal Policy (National Center for Higher Education, n. p.)

Although the 28 sites in the state of Oklahoma have each responded to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education's policy in various ways, it is not known to what extent or to



what degree each site has participated in implementing the seven orientations. During the three years since the policy has been in place, learning sites have had various implementation practices; however, there has been a limited amount of research on each of the seven orientations.

### *Significance of the Study*

This study could provide Oklahoma's state regents with information on the barriers to the implementation of the Learning Site Initiative and provide research data to the individual colleges and universities as to the extent to which different institutions are implementing the policy. Currently, no data exist regarding the implementation policy at individual institutions. At no time in Oklahoma's history has the state been better positioned to build its intellectual power and make a difference in recruiting business and industry. The proportion of Oklahomans younger than 25 years of age who are earning a degree is rising and six-year graduation rates for students earning a bachelor's degree have increased slightly over the last decade (Oklahoma State Regents, 1999). Oklahoma retained a C- on a recent report card issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in higher education completion rates (as cited in Brown, 2002). Much more has to be done to ensure that Oklahoma's citizens are prepared to successfully compete in the global, knowledge-based economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This study could contribute to the foundation for the development of a proactive equitable means of using higher education resources to address unmet higher education needs in communities around the state.

### *Delimitation and Limitations*

The participants in the study consisted of 14 chief academic officers of the colleges and universities, higher education centers, and the University Learning Center in the state of Oklahoma who have the experience in making decisions regarding implementation of the

Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. Chief academic officers are often reluctant to discuss institutional procedures unless there is some benefit to their respective institution. There is in academia, just as in public education, “turf” that is perceived to be private and protected. The study was limited to 28 learning sites in the state of Oklahoma, although there are many more private and religious learning sites in the state. For the purpose of this study, the regional universities were included along with the two-year colleges, the two higher education centers, and the University Learning Center. This study was conducted only in the state of Oklahoma. Because I felt that some participants might be reluctant to discuss problems in their own institutions, or perceptions made by the Oklahoma State Regents, the respondents were assured confidentiality.

### *Overview of the Study*

Chapter 1 included an introduction to the study, the statement of the problem, and significance of the study. The specific research questions that guided the study as well as delimitations and limitations of the study were given. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature that is pertinent to the study. It contains data that relate to the topic of higher education in the state of Oklahoma that will include formation of the higher education system, emergence of the governance structure and policymaking in the Oklahoma Higher Education System, and outreach efforts to the citizens of Oklahoma. Chapter 3 presents the research design for the study. Included in Chapter 3 is a discussion about the development of the focus group methodology, including the focus group and interview questions, selection of participants, measurement of variables, data collection, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 includes the findings from the focus group meetings and interviews with chief academic officers. Chapter 5 presents conclusions from the study and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative may be examined from a number of perspectives. This study will review related literature from three areas: (a) formation of the higher education system in the state of Oklahoma, (b) emergence of governance structure and policymaking in the Oklahoma higher education system, and (c) outreach efforts to the citizens of Oklahoma.

#### *Formation of the Higher Education System in Oklahoma*

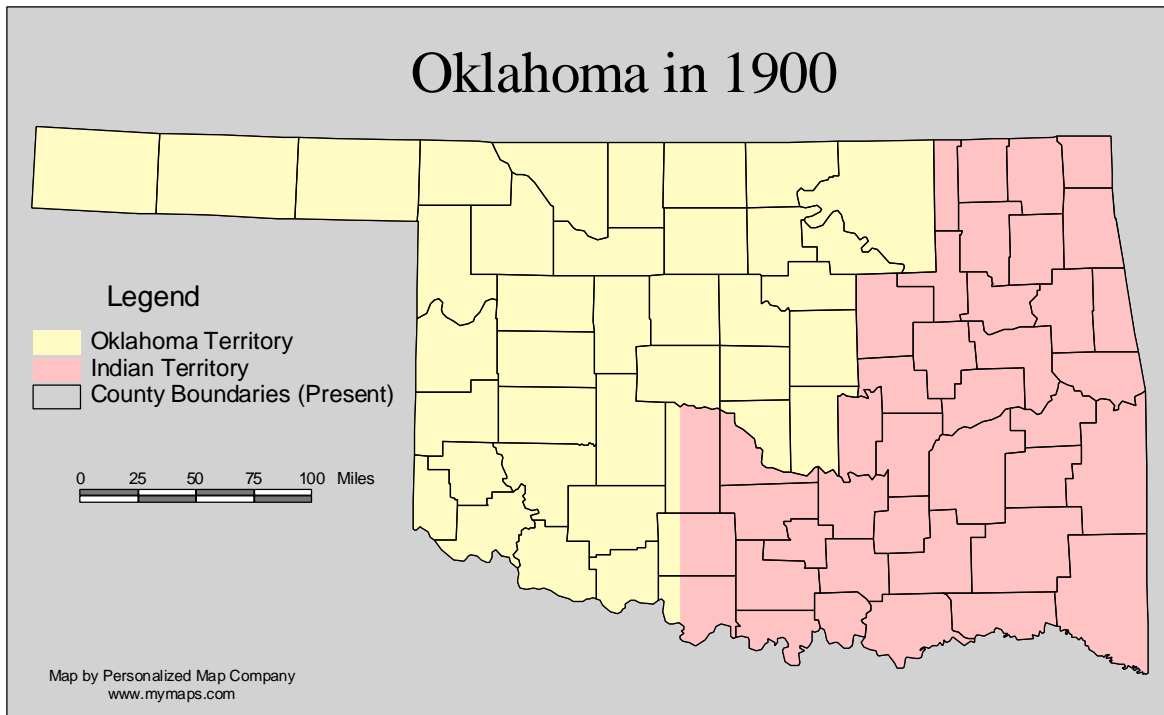
It is essential to understand early developments that took place in what was then Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory and the early division of what now comprises the state of Oklahoma. Meeting the needs for higher education in Oklahoma can be more completely comprehended by understanding the early history of higher education in Oklahoma.

#### *Territorial Days: The Early Years (1880-1907)*

Higher education began in Indian Territory before Oklahoma became a state. Almon C. Bacone established Indian University in 1880 as a Baptist mission school. This university granted its first bachelor degrees in 1883. It was renamed Bacone College in 1910 to honor its founder (Oklahoma Museum of Higher Education, 2002).

On April 22, 1889, the first Oklahoma lands were opened for settlement. As a result, six central Oklahoma counties, Canadian, Cleveland, Kingfisher, Logan, Oklahoma, and Payne were settled and occupied (Dunlap, 1956). Approximately one year later, the Territory of Oklahoma was established on May 2, 1890, by an act of Congress of the same date (Oklahoma State Statutes, 1921). This Act was referred to as the Organic Act and was signed by President Grover

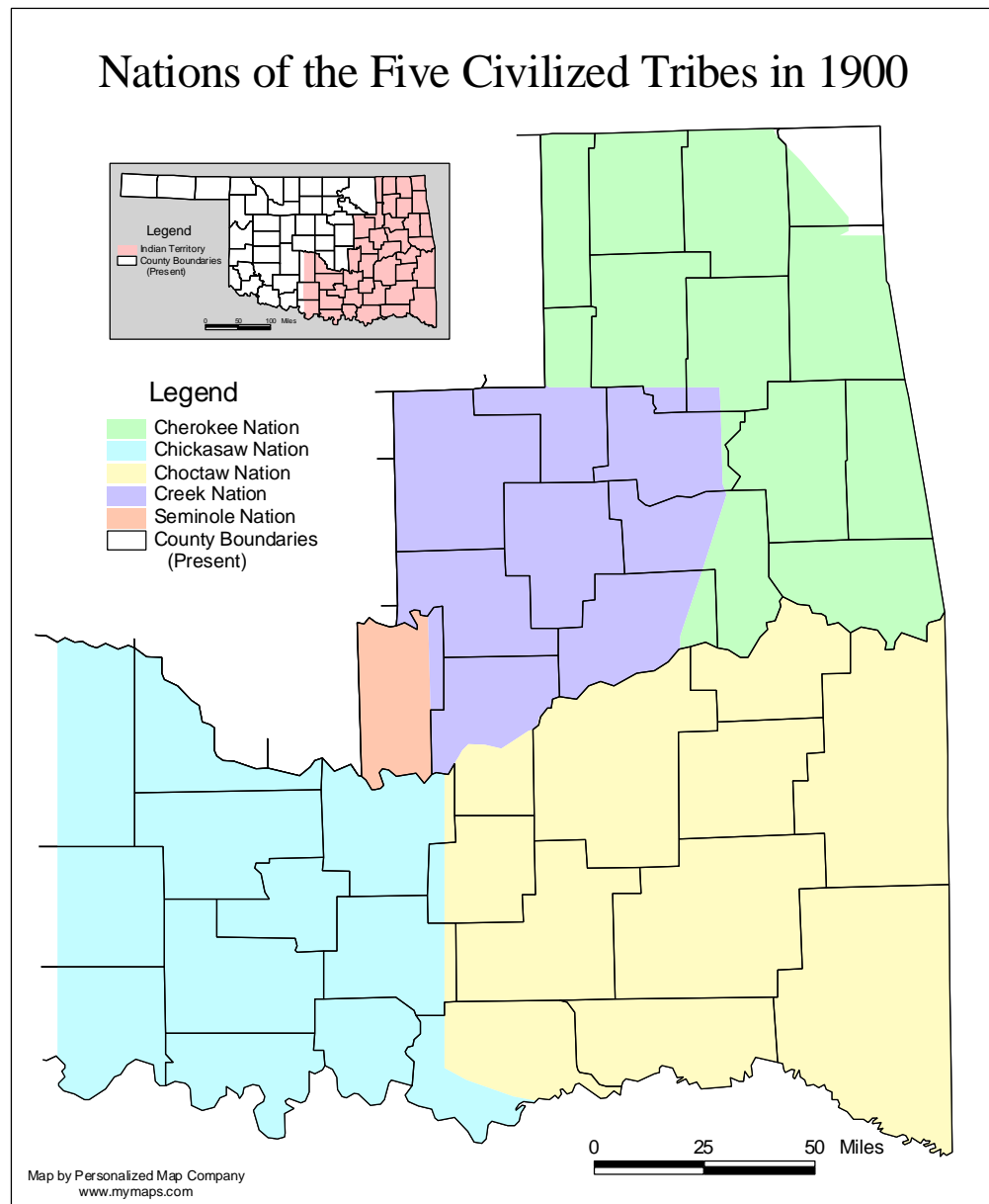
Cleveland. The Act provided for what is now the western half of the state of Oklahoma with Indian Territory lying to the east (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Oklahoma in 1900. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).

Indian Territory consisted of five nations of Native Americans, each of which had its own governing body. In Oklahoma history, these nations are known as the Five Civilized Tribes. The tribes were the Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole (see Figure 2). Before statehood, there were 45 Indian schools established in the two territories, the majority of which were located in Indian Territory (McReynolds, Marriot, & Faulconer, 1961). The Oklahoma territorial government set the pattern for public higher education and recognized the need for providing education beyond high school for the people of the state particularly in the areas of

liberal arts, agricultural and the mechanic arts, and teacher training (Oklahoma State Regents, 1980).



*Figure 2.* Nations of the Five Civilized Tribes in 1900. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).

Seven public and 28 private and denominational colleges were established before statehood (see Tables 1, 2, and Figure 3). Of these institutions, five were abandoned and six were renamed or moved to another location (Oklahoma Museum of Higher Education, 2002).

Table 1

*Public Colleges Established in Oklahoma Before Statehood*

School	Location	Year Est.	Year Opened
Central State Normal	Edmond	1890	1891
Oklahoma A & M College	Stillwater	1890	1891
University of Oklahoma	Norman	1890	1892
Northwestern Normal	Alva	1897	1897
Colored Agricultural and Normal	Langston	1897	1898
University Prep School	Tonkawa	1901	1902
Southwestern Normal	Weatherford	1901	1903

Table 2

*Private Colleges Established in Oklahoma Before Statehood*

School	Location	Year Est.	Notes
Shawnee Indian Training School	Shawnee	1874	
Sacred Heart Academy	Asher	1876	
Bacone College	Tahlequah	1880	Moved to Muskogee in 1895

Table 2 (continued)

School	Location	Year Est.	Notes
Lady of Good Counsel	Lehigh	1883	
Saint Elizabeth's Cathedral	Purcell	1888	Abandoned in 1948
El Meta Bond	Minco	1891	Disbanded in 1920
Catholic College of Oklahoma for Young Women	Guthrie	1891	AKA Saint Joseph's Academy
Rainy Mountain Boarding School	Gotebo	1891	
Eufaula Boarding School	Eufaula	1892	
Henry Kendall College	Muskogee	1893	Moved to Tulsa in 1907
Calvin College	Durant	1894	Changed to Oklahoma Presbyterian College for Girls in 1907
Kingfisher College	Kingfisher	1895	
Holy Family School	Tulsa	1899	
Academy College	Guthrie	1901	
Saint Mary's Academy	Ponca City	1901	
Baptist College	Blackwell	1901	Abandoned in 1913; absorbed by Oklahoma Baptist University
Lawton Business College	Lawton	1902	
Perry SDA School	Perry	1902	
IOOF Orphan's Home	Checotah	1902	
Epworth University	Oklahoma City	1903	Name changed to Oklahoma City University in 1924

Table 2 (continued)

School	Location	Year Est.	Notes
Draughan's Business College	Oklahoma City	1903	
Tulsa Business College	Tulsa	1903	
Southwest Baptist College	Hastings	1903	Abandoned in 1914
Selvidge Business College	Ardmore	1904	
Hills Business College	Oklahoma City	1905	
Cordell Academy	Cordell	1905	
Beulah Heights College	Oklahoma City	1906	Become Bethany College in 1920
Oklahoma Christian University	Enid	1907	Renamed Phillips University in 1913

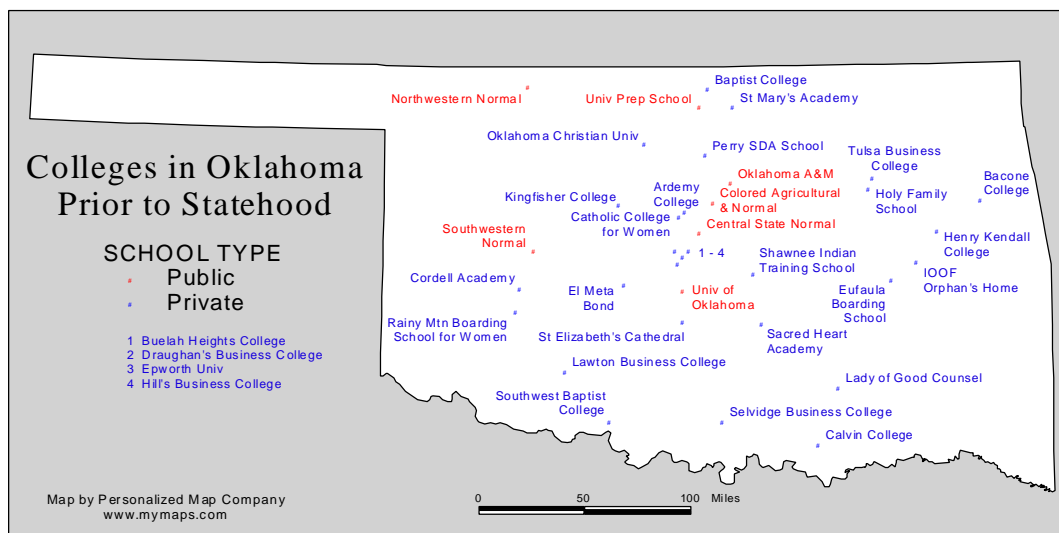


Figure 3. Colleges in Oklahoma Prior to Statehood. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).



### *Statehood to 1941*

In 1906, Congress passed the Enabling Act that authorized statehood for Oklahoma. On July 16, 1907, a convention was held in Guthrie, Indian Territory and a constitution was adopted. The people of Oklahoma ratified it on September 17, 1907 and Oklahoma became the 46<sup>th</sup> state of the Union on November 16, 1907 (Oklahoma State Website, 2004).

Fifteen state schools were established after statehood (see Table 3). Of these schools, four were abolished and three were renamed or moved to another location within the state (Oklahoma Museum of Higher Education, 2002). By 1919, the state of Oklahoma had 18 institutions of higher learning. The legislature was chiefly responding to the political pressure from Indian Territory that provided the majority of early legislators and governors. Scales and Goble (1982) surmised that this sudden creation of so many institutions of higher learning might have indicated more political opportunism than public need.

Table 3

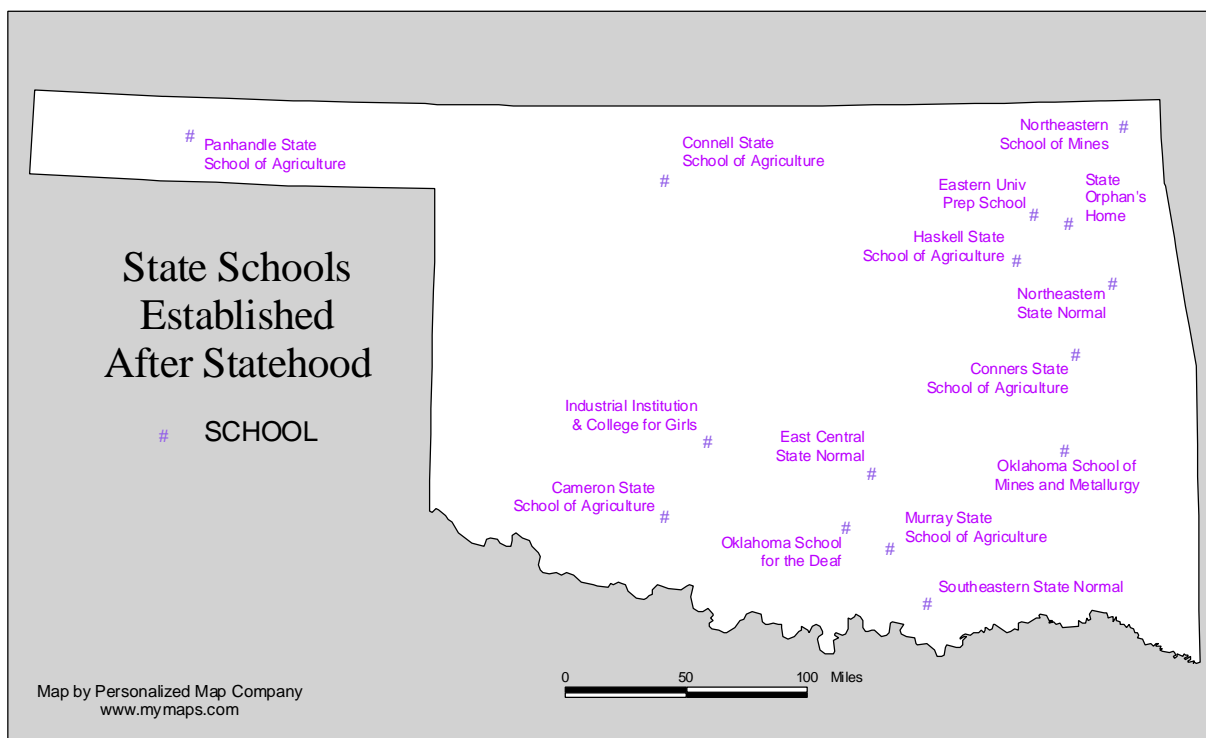
#### *Public Colleges in Oklahoma Established After Statehood*

School	Location	Year Est.	Year Opened	Notes
Industrial Institution and College for Girls	Chickasha	1908	1909	Become Oklahoma College for Women in 1916
Oklahoma School of Mines and Metallurgy	Wilburton	1908	1909	Abolished in 1917.
State Orphan's Home	Prior	1908	1908	
Cameron State School of Agriculture	Lawton	1908	1909	
Connell State School of Agriculture	Helena	1908	1908	Abolished in 1917

Table 3 (continued)

School	Location	Year Est.	Year Opened	Notes
Murray State School of Agriculture	Tishomingo	1908	1908	
Haskell State School of Agriculture	Broken Arrow	1908	1908	Abolished in 1917
Connors State School of Agriculture	Warner	1908	1909	
Panhandle State School of Agriculture	Goodwell	1909	1909	
Oklahoma School for the Deaf	Sulphur	1909	1909	
Northeastern State Normal	Tahlequah	1909	1909	
Southeastern State Normal	Durant	1909	1909	
East Central State Normal	Ada	1909	1909	
Eastern University Prep School	Claremore	1909	1909	Abolished in 1917
Northeastern School of Mines	Miami	1919	1919	Named changed to Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in 1943

Figure 4 shows the names and locations of the 15 state schools that were established after Oklahoma became the 46th state of the Union on November 16, 1907.

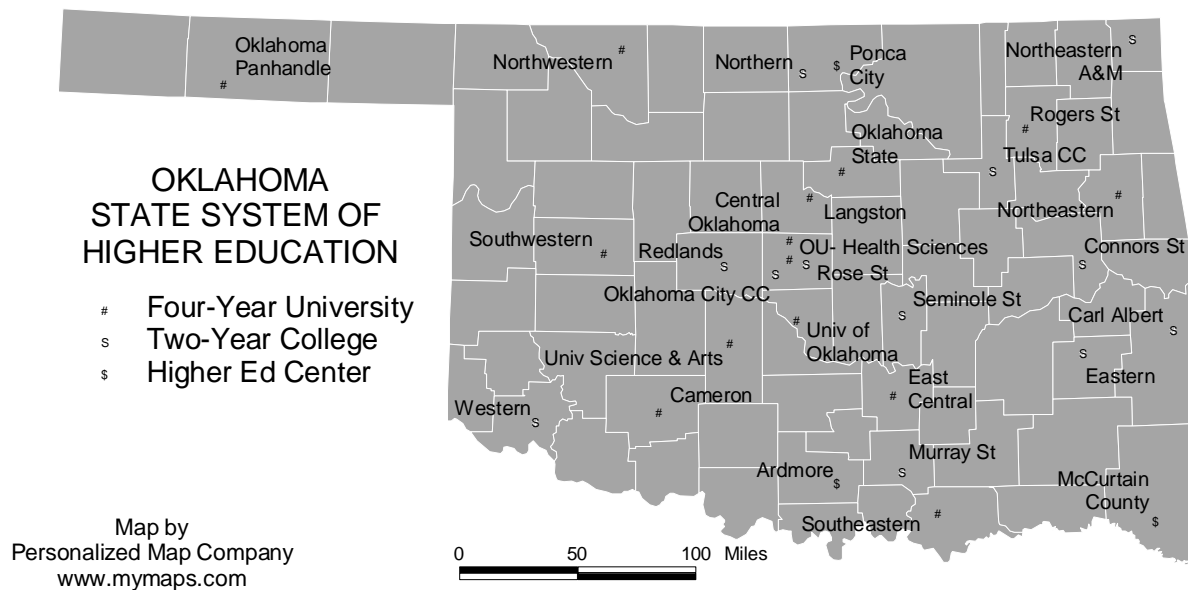


*Figure 4. State Schools Established After Statehood. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).*

### *1941 to Present*

On March 11, 1941, all state institutions of higher education became part of the state system of higher education by constitutional amendment (see Appendix D). According to the Oklahoma State Statutes (2002), the following educational institutions (see Figure 5) comprised the Oklahoma state system of higher education: University of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, Langston University, Oklahoma Panhandle State University, Murray State College, Connors State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, Cameron University, Eastern Oklahoma State College, Northeastern Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, University of Central Oklahoma, East Central University, Northeastern State University,

Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Southwestern Oklahoma State University, University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, Rogers State University, Carl Albert State College, Redlands Community College, Northern Oklahoma College, Oklahoma City Community College, Rose State College, Seminole State College, Tulsa Community College, and Western Oklahoma State College (Oklahoma State Statutes, 2002).



*Figure 5.* Institutions in the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).

### *Governance*

In Oklahoma, a central coordinating board of control, the Oklahoma state regents for higher education, has the constitutional power for the fiscal and academic operations of the public institutions of higher education. The Legislature appropriates a lump sum to the regents who in turn allocate funds to the higher education institutions. In order to understand how

pertinent this is to the governance of higher education, a look at the procedural and political aspects of the history of governance in the state must be attained.

Higher education in Oklahoma was an assemblage of 18 loosely related institutions governed by different boards prior to 1941 (see Table 4). Institutions were duplicating each other's instruction and programs and competing for the same share of money, even after 35 years. The need for statewide planning and coordination had become apparent. Three areas of concern were primary: academic standards, institutional function, and finance (Duke, 1984).

Table 4

*Governance of Oklahoma Institutions Prior to 1941*

Institution	Governed By
University of Oklahoma	Board of Regents of OU
Oklahoma A & M College	State Board of Agriculture
Murray State College	State Board of Agriculture
Connors State College	State Board of Agriculture
Panhandle State College	State Board of Agriculture
Cameron State College	State Board of Agriculture
Industrial Institution for Girls	State Board of Agriculture
Oklahoma School of Mines & Metallurgy	Board of Regents of OSMM
Miami School of Mines	Board of Regents of MSM

Table 4 (continued)

Institution	Governed By
Oklahoma College for Women	Board of Regents of OCW
Colored Agricultural & Normal University	Board of Regents of CA & NU
Six Normal Schools (East Central, Southeastern, Northeastern, Central, Northwestern, & Southwestern	All governed by Oklahoma State Board of Education
University Prep @ Tonkawa	Board of Regents of Oklahoma State Business Academy

Note. Board of Public Affairs administered the finances of all institutions except those under the Board of Agriculture (Oklahoma State Regents, 1942, p. 3).

From 1919 to 1939, nine boards were in control and no major changes occurred in the administrative organization for higher education. Then, the legislature made a dramatic change with the result being to relieve the State Board of Education of control over the six teachers' colleges. This reduced the total number of governing boards from nine to six but there was still no logical grouping of like institutions under single boards. The intent of the legislature was to centralize control of the institutions in order to economize. The goal of each of the institutions was to survive, upgrade, and expand (Duke, 1984).

In 1941, a system of higher education was established by approval of a state question submitted to the people. On March 11, 1941, the Oklahoma Constitution was amended to create the unified Oklahoma State System of Higher Education (Oklahoma State Regents, 1942). The state coordinating board for higher education was named the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (Halstead, 1974). This put Oklahoma among the first states to create a state system of higher education.

Article XIII (see Appendix D) provided that all institutions of higher education supported wholly or in part by direct legislative appropriations would be integral parts of a unified system.

The operating boards of the individual institutions that were in existence were not abolished but were instead placed under the jurisdiction of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The regents were to serve as liaisons between the institutions and the political leaders. Article VIII-A created funding to make it possible for the regents instead of the legislators to determine the size of allocations to be given to each institution (Duke, 1984). The State Board of Regents was given the following planning and decision-making authority to:

1. prescribe higher education standards for each institution,
2. determine functions and courses of study for each institution,
3. grant degrees and various forms of academic recognition at each institution,
4. recommend budget allocations for each institution to the Legislature,
5. allocate funds to each institution, and
6. determine student fees.

Even though the State Regents for Higher Education served as the coordinating board for all state institutions, most institutions in the state agreed that the Legislature had sole power to establish and close institutions (Cartwright, 1980).

Because the Oklahoma Legislature recognizes the importance of education being locally focused, each higher education institution is governed by its own policy making and planning board. The duties of these boards include:

1. management policy;
2. employment, salary and duties of employees;
3. contracting for services;
4. record custody;
5. purchasing and owning property;
6. academic administration;
7. student life;
8. administering the budget;
9. facility planning and construction; and
10. auxiliary enterprises and general administration. (Oklahoma State Regents, 2002, n. p.)

## *Outreach*

Distance education has been defined and debated among scholars for more than two decades. The fundamental concept of distance education is simple. Students and teachers are separated by distance and sometimes by time (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). Moore and Kearsley used the following definition for distance education:

Distance education is planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements. (p. 2)

Moore and Thompson (1990) developed a typology of four levels to describe how distance learning exists. The four levels were distance learning programs, distance learning units, distance learning institution, and distance learning consortia. Each level was self-explanatory in that each used different activities and had different responsibilities.

In 1970, a statewide microwave network was established in order to meet the growing needs of higher education in the state of Oklahoma (Moss, 1997). With the onset of this OneNet plan, the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education became an active player in the field of distance education. Telecommunications in higher education grew out of needs based on both economic factors and state leadership. State industry had expressed needs for access to higher education, and leadership in the state system advocated expansion using televised instruction rather than creating new campuses.

The Oklahoma State Legislature (Oklahoma State Statutes, 1970) directed the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to:

Establish and maintain, as a part of the state system of higher education, a system of televised instruction designed primarily for persons living in industrial communities remote from the campuses of colleges and universities, and for the interchange of classes and teachers between the campuses of the State's public and private colleges and universities. (59 O.S. 2166)

Legislators also gave direction to the state regents to plan a complete system that would interconnect all colleges and universities in the state (Oklahoma State Statutes, 1970).



Talkback Television or TBTv was developed as an analog microwave transmission system that provided one-way video and two-way audio. It developed into a system that reached most areas of the state involving almost one half of the system's institutions as originators of programming and included over 60 receive sites. This network used point-to-point microwave and Instructional Television Fixed Service (Moss, 1997).

Two key policy issues emerged during the early development of the TBTv system. Residency and transfer of credits were two of the major academic issues. An academic advisory committee was created that included representatives from each of the graduate credit providers as well as regents' staff members. The committee composed a plan for free exchange of credit to ensure that courses taken via the microwave network were fully transferable among institutions (Oklahoma State Regents, 1977). Other issues that were addressed were institutional and technical. State policies determined that only regular faculty who volunteered would teach on the system and there would be no additional compensation. Technical issues under the state policy included a requirement that all instruction be conducted "live" and that videotaping was not allowed. Classes offered via the system were also required to have additional on-campus students enrolled and present in the classroom where the instructor was transmitting (Moss, 1998).

In October 1977, the state regents approved a new policy that included provisions for courses offered via electronic media or other nontraditional methods. This policy was implemented for extension and public service programs. During this period, there were explicit concerns related to quality control and the need for inter-institutional coordination. In 1981, the policy was revised and Oklahoma gained national recognition (Moss, 1997).

Zeller (1995) described four models to categorize distance education systems by policy orientation: *laissez faire*, consortium, coordinating board, and comprehensive. The models were based on differentiations over the dimensions of eight properties of distance education systems. Zeller cited three states (including Oklahoma) as being exemplary in the coordinating board

orientation. This model was characterized by state-level planning primarily institution-driven rather than a client-driven focus and some level of mediation between institutions.

In the early 1980s, some reorganization occurred at the state regents' office and policy was consolidated with administration. This allowed for better educational outreach. At the same time, institutions began requesting cable TV and telecourses in order to further their offerings. The state regents responded by developing guidelines for courses offered by means of electronic media and included provisions for orientations, minimum contacts, student services, fees, and class size. However, these standards and guidelines were not made a part of the official state policy.

In March of 1985, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation contributed a \$5.8 million grant to the state of Oklahoma (Access to Excellence, 1986). This grant, along with contributions from two other foundations and the state legislature, provided monies for a major instructional telecommunications project. Portions of the network were converted to digital microwave, and voice and data communication capabilities were added.

In 1988, the state regents approved a revised policy for educational outreach that was organized in a different manner and was more comprehensive. The standards that had been only recommendations in the early 1980s were now incorporated into the official policy; they included a statement of purpose, definitions, and sections on educational standards and statewide coordination. In 1990, the Educational Outreach General Policy underwent additional revisions that allowed some flexibility for institutions in certain areas and reduced the planning functions of the state regents. In 1994, an off-campus policy was approved that removed all references to electronic media courses and the new Policies and Procedures Pertaining to the Electronic Delivery of Courses and Programs was approved (Oklahoma State Regents, 1995).

In 1992, the citizens of Oklahoma passed a capital bond initiative that provided resources for higher education. A portion of those funds was designated for telecommunications. After much planning and process that involved studies, reports, and recommendations, a plan was

approved to build an information and telecommunications network for education and government. This plan became known as OneNet (Moss, 1997). OneNet was developed as a partnership between the state of Oklahoma and the state's telecommunications companies. It used existing facilities of telecommunications providers through leasing agreements. OneNet maintained 33 hub sites with digital fiber-optic communications, and high-bandwidth services; it also used full-motion interactive video services. Compressed video, voice, data, and Internet services were added as the demand grew at each hub site.

### *Barriers to Distance Education*

Repman and Logan (1996) discussed four kinds of interactions and possible barriers to success for students and faculty who learned and taught at a distance. The first interaction was learner-content related; information presented to the learner should lead to knowledge acquisition. Possible barriers to this interaction included the learner's preferred learning style or the student's determination of the relevance of the information given.

The second interaction Repman and Logan (1996) discussed was learner-instructor interaction. This was where communication between the learner and the instructor made interaction dependent upon each one's ability. Barriers to this type of interaction were often related to the fact that distance puts both students and faculty in new and unfamiliar roles and makes them uncomfortable presenting information they otherwise would not struggle to transmit.

The third type of interaction discussed was learner-learner interaction. This applied to the process of students interacting with other students. Repman and Logan (1996) noted that barriers encountered in this type of interaction might be the lack of a sense of community or the diversity of students who could literally be participating from around the world.

The final type of interaction, according to Repman and Logan (1996), was learner-interface interaction. This referred to the ability to make the technology transparent for the

student. Bruce and Shade (1995) described both the student and instructor as being uncomfortable with the technology. This created a barrier to learning by the technology itself.

According to Hillesheim (1998), barriers to success for students and faculty fell into three general categories. Those were: characteristics of the students themselves, the relationship between students and faculty, and problems related to the technology. Hillesheim's study was based on the online environment at Walden University. Hillesheim gathered information from Walden University's asynchronous, online program at the master's level and used the information to provide possible strategies for other institutions using online delivery models.

Galusha (1997) also discovered that there were several problems and barriers encountered in distance learning. She grouped her categories into three distinct areas. For the purpose of this study, the three categories of barriers examined were: student barriers, faculty barriers, and organizational barriers.

### *Barriers to Students*

Student barriers include costs and motivators, feedback and teacher contact, student support and services, alienation and isolation, and lack of experience and training. Distance learners were more likely, according to Knapper (1988), to have insecurities about learning than their on-campus counterparts were. Among the insecurities that these students faced were personal and school related issues such as finances, lack of support from family and/or employers, disruption of family life, and irrelevance of their studies.

The perceivable lack of concern and feedback from teachers was another source of apprehension for distance learners. It is important that students receive prompt feedback. This is especially significant for students who live outside metropolitan areas because they may not have access to reliable telecommunications equipment, computers, or mail service. These types of barriers, according to Wood (1996), cause frustrations and are factors of which distance education planners should be made aware.

Often, distance students do not receive support and services such as tutoring, technical assistance, academic advisement, or scheduling that the traditional students receive. This causes isolation and alienation. Oaks (1996) cited the need for precedence in student support services for distance learners so that success in attracting, serving, and retaining students would hinge more on excellent student support services than on technology issues.

### *Barriers to Faculty*

Faculty barriers in distance learning included lack of staff training in course development and technology, lack of support for distance learning in general, and inadequate faculty selection for distance learning courses (Galusha, 1997). Technology such as computers, video equipment, and communications software often presented problems and frustrations for faculty. With the advent of computers, telecommunications, and the Internet, an unprecedented opportunity was provided for faculty and students to learn in a cooperative environment. Faculty must learn how to use the technology if they are to teach distance courses. Training is imperative to the success of distance learning. Often, there is little or no training for faculty and teachers may lack the basic skills or hardware to fully participate in distance education (Galusha).

Another barrier for distance learning for faculty was the threat to tenure and human resource staffing. Courses taught as part of a distance program may not always count toward tenure considerations. In addition, if one faculty member can teach several students over ITV or the Internet, then fewer departments and professors will be needed. This could lead to overburdening and burnout of faculty (Galusha, 1997).

The biggest barrier, as far as faculty was concerned, was the lack of support and commitment by other faculty members. The endorsement by department faculty was viewed as a critical instructional element in any distance education program (Galusha, 1997). Faculty members must be willing to change their roles in administering distance education programs and

some must change their teaching styles to that of mentor, tutor, and facilitator. This could be challenging for teachers who usually teach traditional courses for students.

Choosing the right professor to teach the right course for distance learning was the final barrier as it pertained to faculty. Teachers who look forward to the idea of distance learning can more easily achieve success in the distance-learning environment. According to Galusha (1997), it would be much easier to select these faculty members than to force others who were not so willing.

### *Organizational Barriers*

The final areas of barriers in distance learning to be examined were organizational barriers. Organizational barriers included funding, technology, and institutional, organizational, and administrative support.

Because distance learning required changes in curriculum, modes of instruction, and the traditional role of teachers as information providers, cost was identified as one of the most common barriers in the organizational area of distance learning (Yap, 1996). Costs included initial capital outlay, ongoing operation and maintenance, and continuing subscription to a delivery system.

According to Yearwood and Nichols (1998), the cost of distance learning for a single site was approximately \$30,000 in the state of Texas. Their study was targeted at Texas public schools as well as small community colleges and the Center for Professional Development. In addition to start-up outlays for equipment and installation, there were continuing expenses for line charges and training and upgrading of hardware and software. Yearwood and Nichols also discussed specialized training for administrators and teachers. All of those factors required a major budget commitment that might be difficult for a small university or a public school to manage.

In McNeil's (1990) discussion of the nation's most experienced leaders in the uses of technology, he pointed out that while most participants agreed that more funds were going to be needed to make the use of technology effective and widespread, there were sharp differences as to how technology should be funded. Several participants advocated increased federal funding while others suggested that partnerships among educational institutions, industry, and federal and state agencies provided a more realistic approach to financing the adaptation of technology to the institutions.

The technology itself was seen as a barrier to distance education when organizations tried to implement it. Lewis and Wall (1990) discussed obstacles of logistics, turf battles, and security systems as being part of the annoyances of distance learning. Faculty members were expected to develop as well as use the technology and often discovered that the wrong equipment had been delivered or the software would not work correctly. At other times, the computer lab was inaccessible to faculty or students.

The rapid pace of change was another technical obstacle faced by distance learning organizations. Lewis and Wall (1990) surmised that it would be difficult to design a local, regional, statewide, or multistate delivery system that would take advantage of current technological capabilities and yet not be in danger of becoming obsolete in the near future.

Participants in a study performed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (2000) found that digital technologies were in various stages of development and deployment in distance learning. Newer technologies posed more accessibility problems than older technologies. For example, increased access to cable television, along with the development of related technology, resulted in some telecommunication courses being more readily accessible than Internet-based courses.

Furst-Bowe (1996) looked at technology barriers and found that the lack of compatibility between systems, lack of management support, and lack of trainer skills were identified by more than 50% of the respondents in her study. These findings indicated that significant barriers

existed and needed to be resolved before distance learning could be fully implemented. She recommended that colleges and universities form partnerships with business and industry or professional associations to assist in providing training to meet these needs.

In a case study of Rochester Institute of Technology, it was demonstrated that a four-year college had incorporated technology into almost every phase of its operations (McNeil, 1990). In order to have quality teaching and learning environments, Rochester Institute of Technology encouraged faculty to make use of technology. Classrooms and lecture halls were equipped for telephone and computer access and cabled for closed circuit video. Media equipment (including audio conferencing equipment, projection video, and computer display units) with operators was provided upon request. All services were extended to off-campus programs as well. One significant development was the establishment of the Division of Academic Services and Computing. The division employed 144 staff members, of whom 87 were professional staff. Thus, the professional staff members that were responsible for introducing technology systems and keeping them together were also working together with overlapping job responsibilities. This created an environment for interactive dialogue, and for faculty to be involved (McNeil).

In order for distance learning programs to be successful, Yearwood (Yearwood & Nichols, 1998) cited the lack of cooperation as a barrier for institutions. She stated that the essential contribution of distance learning was to connect people and institutions and added that different goals, management styles, and schedules must be reconciled if cooperative relationships are to be successful. Yap (1996) also discussed a lack of community support and negative staff attitudes toward change and technology as impeding factors for organizations.

Institutional leaders must be committed to distance programs. Marrs (1995) suggested that without support from administration, distance education was at risk of becoming a peripheral activity without commitment from or significance to the institution.



### *Summary*

The state of Oklahoma is at a crossroads in the field of distance education. While Oklahoma has a rich history in the politics and governance of higher education, the state is lagging behind in realistic goals and leadership in technology. The state higher education goals of economic development, equity, efficiency, and diversity all take on new meaning when applied to distance education issues (Jonsen & Johnstone, 1991). A system that includes a variety of institutional types such as community colleges, research universities, regional universities, and higher education centers is one that is more responsive to its citizens by offering choice. State leadership is becoming more important because of all these choices.

Distance learning has been considered a deviation from the norm of traditional education and standards of quality have been based on traditional campus-based learning (Chaloux, 1985). Distance learning and technology have been presented as possible approaches to expand access and improve the quality of higher education. The issues of turf and territoriality are barriers that will likely long be discussed at the institutional and faculty levels.

This chapter provided background and literature on the formation of the higher education system in the state of Oklahoma, the emergence of governance structure and policymaking in the Oklahoma higher education system, and outreach efforts to the citizens of Oklahoma. Barriers to distance learning were examined in three areas: student, faculty, and organization. The Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative and Brain Gain 2010 set the stage for the state to forge ahead in educational access and collaboration for both students and institutions.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methods used in the study. It includes a discussion of the research design, selection of participants, development of interview guides and questions, measurement of variables, the development of focus group questions, and data collection and analysis. This chapter also provides explanations relating to trustworthiness of the data.

#### *Research Design*

For this study, I used a qualitative research method by employing a focus group interview process and indepth interviews with key informants. Qualitative data were collected from participants who described barriers to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative.

The study included two phases. Phase I consisted of qualitative focus group interviews (see Appendix B). Phase II was also qualitative, employing semistructured interviews with 14 chief academic officers who had experience in making decisions regarding implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative (see Appendix C).

#### *Phase I*

According to Layzell (1990), qualitative methods lend themselves to studying the complicated environment in which higher education policies are formed and this might allow the resulting research to be more useful and influential in the policy process. Merriam (1998) described qualitative inquiry as a focus on meaning and context. She referred to several terms that are used interchangeably such as naturalistic inquiry, interpretive research, case study, and ethnography. Merriam characterized qualitative research as an umbrella concept that covers

several forms of inquiry to help understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with little disruption of the natural setting.

Krueger (1988) identified the following as characteristics of a focus group:

1. It is a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment.
2. It is conducted with approximately 7 to 10 people by a skilled interviewer.
3. The discussion is relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions.
4. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion.

Six focus groups were selected for the study. In order to represent each section of the state of Oklahoma, three groups from the northern tier of the state were selected and three groups from the southern part of the state were selected. One group in each part of the state consisted of various administrative staff members such as academic advisors, coordinators, and technology personnel from institutions in the state of Oklahoma. The second group consisted of various faculty members who were familiar with distance learning by teaching a Web-based course, teaching on Interactive TV (ITV), or teaching at a satellite campus or higher education center. The final focus group in each part of the state consisted of students who learned at a distance either by Web, ITV, or at a distant site. By addressing issues and concerns of these six focus groups, I solicited and validated potential questions for the interview guide that was used with the chief academic officers.

A standardized open-ended interview was used for the focus groups (see Appendix B). According to Patton (1990), the standardized open-ended interview involves a predetermined sequence and wording of the set of questions to be asked of each respondent in order to minimize the possibility of bias. Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, and Sabshin (1981) suggested four major categories of questions to be used in interviewing. They are: hypothetical, devil's advocate,

ideal-position, and interpretive. Each of these types of questions was used during the focus groups. Guiding questions for the focus group interviews were audio taped as the researcher took notes simultaneously.

### *Selection of Focus Group Participants*

I chose participants from intact groups to represent the different segments of the focus groups. According to Patton (1990), the intact group should be information rich. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance (Jones, 2001). At the onset, a gatekeeper was chosen in both the northern and southern tiers of the state to assist in identifying potential students, faculty, and administrative staff to participate in the study. The participants were identified with the use of snowball, or chain sampling (Patton, 1990). The process began with the gatekeepers asking a small number of students, faculty, and administrators from each college or university to identify persons they considered involved in the distance-learning processes. The gatekeeper then contacted the participants by telephone and focus group interviews were scheduled.

A letter explaining the study was mailed to each participant and agreements were given to the participants at the beginning of each session (see Appendix A). The faculty focus group in the northern tier of Oklahoma was comprised of 13 members, each from a participating institution and each with background in teaching via ITV, web, or at a distant site. Their disciplines included business, nursing, legal studies, and economics. The faculty focus group in the southern tier of Oklahoma was comprised of nine members, each from a participating institution and each with background in teaching via ITV, Web, or at a distant site. Their disciplines included education, psychology, biology, geography, English, and counseling. The student focus group in northern Oklahoma was comprised of eight members who were either presently taking classes at a distant site via live instruction or ITV, or who were taking a Web course. The student focus group from southern Oklahoma was comprised of 13 members who

were taking courses on the Internet, via ITV, or at a distant site. The administrative staff in the northern part of the state was comprised of 11 members who served in various aspects at each participating institution. Their positions included Trio program personnel, deans, student services coordinators, administrative assistants, and ITV personnel. In southern Oklahoma there were 12 members representing their various institutions and appointments. These included ITV coordinators, advisors, financial aid personnel, administrative assistants, bookstore personnel, library personnel, department chairpersons, and deans.

## *Phase II*

After the six focus group interviews were completed, indepth interviews were held with chief academic officers from institutions in the state of Oklahoma. Individual interviews were scheduled throughout the state. The interviews were scheduled by telephone and set up at the interviewees' convenience. All of the interviews were conducted at the interviewees' own institutions.

### *Participants in the Interviews*

The population consisted of the 28 chief academic officers of the colleges and universities, higher education centers, and the University Learning Center in the state of Oklahoma. I determined that as many officers as possible should be interviewed because each institution played a part in implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. Each officer had unique experiences with barriers that should be understood and analyzed.

Chief academic officers who had the experience of making decisions regarding implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative participated in this study. In order to ensure a wide range of accessibility (Borg & Gall, 1996), all colleges and universities, higher education centers, and the University Learning Center were considered

Interviews were held with 14 of the 28 chief academic officers of colleges, universities, and higher education centers in Oklahoma (see Appendix C). The questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions to assess the role of higher education institutions in implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative and Brain Gain 2010. Participants provided information on the extent of faculty roles, community needs, and use of programmatic and course expertise of sister institutions.

### *Development of Interview Guides*

I developed the focus group interview guide and the individual interview guide with the assistance of Dr. John Bedford, East Central University and Dr. Russ West, East Tennessee State University. Dr. John Bedford is an expert in the areas of qualitative research and distance learning and serves as the Chair of the Department of Education at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. Dr. Russ West is also an expert in qualitative research and serves as the Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City. See Appendix C for a copy of the interview guide that was used in the study.

### *Development of Focus Group and Interview Questions*

The goal of the study was to determine what kinds of barriers, if any, existed in the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. I sought to provide extensive descriptions and analyses about what kinds of barriers existed for faculty, staff, and students who learned and worked in distance learning situations in Oklahoma as well as what kinds of barriers existed for the chief academic officers when trying to implement the policy. These findings might then be used to determine best practices in higher education in Oklahoma as intended by the Oklahoma State Regents as they set forth two goals: (a) to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Oklahoma and (b) to improve Oklahoma's rankings on national economic indicators

to achieve a condition in which Oklahoma's growth rate on national economic indicators is consistently above the national average (National Center for Higher Education, 1998).

After discussing the guiding questions for the study with my peer debriefer, I developed a list of questions that was used in the focus group interviews. These questions were designed to extract information in a meaningful way from the participants and to guide them through a conversation. By using Krueger's (1988) work, we categorized, phrased, and sequenced the questions accordingly. The categories were: (a) overview of the topic; (b) guidelines to encourage good discussion; (c) opening and introductory questions; (d) key, ending, and summary questions; (e) final questions; and (f) closing. The opening and introduction questions (Please tell us your name and which school you represent) were designed to be answered quickly and to make the members of the focus group feel comfortable. Question #1 under key questions (What is your perception of the staff/teaching, administration/student relationship at the sending and receiving sites?) was an introductory question and was designed to allow the focus groups' participants to begin to talk about their relationships with each other and the other people they interacted with at their particular sites. It also allowed the participants to think about their own experiences and connections to various members of the faculty, staff, or other students. Questions #2 (What is your perception of faculty recruitment and incentives for teaching via ITV or off-campus?) and #3 (What is your perception of the student and faculty resources available on campus or off-site for teaching and learning?) were designed for the participants to begin to formulate ideas about how and why faculty and students participate in distance learning. Question #4 (What is your perception of the application, registration, and financial aid processes?) was designed to give the participants a mental picture of all these processes and how all the stakeholders carried them through. Question #5 (What is your perception of the technical compatibility and upgrades at the distant sites?) was used to prod discussion on technology barriers from several different points of view. Question #6 (What is your perception of the learning sites' relationships among each other?), question #7 (What is your perception of the

impact of the learning sites' relationships relative to course offerings?), and question #8 (What is your perception of the impact of the learning sites' relationships as far as sharing facilities?) were used to elicit conversation about how Oklahoma's institutions of higher learning were collaborating. Question #9 (What is your perception of the impact of the learning sites' budgets on delivery of courses and services to off-campus sites?) was designed to specifically address the issue of money. The final questions (What do you consider to be the major barrier or barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative? and Do you have any additional thought that you would like to share regarding barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?) brought closure to the discussion and allowed the participants to reflect on previous comments (see Appendix B).

The Interview Guide (see Appendix C) that was used for the chief academic officers also addressed the research questions from Chapter 1. Question #1 (How are faculty members involved in decision making for your school when it comes to programming?) gave the respondents the opportunity to discuss the ways in which faculty were involved when their particular course or program was used in distance learning. Question #2 (Could you tell me about how you provide for administrative support services and student support services at your distance sites and how you staff those positions?) was used to elicit information about the many different kinds of persons needed to perform duties off campus and how those persons interacted with students and other faculty and staff members. Question #3 (How has the Learning Site Initiative impacted the relationships you have with other institutions that may be in your same geographic service area?) was used to allow the chief academic officers to reflect on their collaborative efforts with sister institutions. Question #4 (Can you discuss program review policies and how your institution decides collaborating efforts with other institutions to develop joint programs, courses, or modules for both distance and on-campus delivery?) was also used for reflections on the basic idea of the Learning Site Initiative, which encouraged collaboration among the institutions. Question #5 (Could you discuss the kinds of incentives, if any, you



institution provides for web course design, development, or teaching on ITV?) was used to bring about a discussion on money and other kinds of incentives that the focus group participants had earlier discussed. The topic of legislative issues was also discussed during this particular question. The final question (What do you consider to be the biggest barrier or barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?) brought closure to the discussion and allowed the chief academic officers to make recommendations to the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

### *Trustworthiness of Data Obtained Through Focus Groups and Individual Interviews*

Trustworthiness in qualitative research helps ensure validity and reliability. The process involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998). There must be some accounting as to how rigorously the studies are conducted. Lincoln (1995) suggested that the emerging criteria for quality in interpretive inquiry be based on considering the relational aspects of the research process, thus collapsing the distinction between quality or rigor and ethics. In focus group research, trustworthiness must be established through the naturalistic paradigm as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In this paradigm, internal validity is replaced by credibility, external validity is replaced by transferability, reliability is replaced by dependability, and objectivity is replaced by confirmability.

Merriam (1998) described six techniques for establishing credibility, or internal validity: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory modes of research, and researchers' biases. The techniques that I used are described in the data collection and analysis section.

The establishment of transferability or external validity is more difficult to attain for the qualitative researcher. Because external validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations, Guba and Lincoln (1981) pointed out that even to discuss the issue, the study must be internally valid before there can be any general

applicability. According to Merriam (1998), part of the difficulty lies in thinking of generalizability in the same way, as do investigators using experimental or correlational designs. To enhance the possibility of generalizing the results of a study, Merriam proposed the following strategies: rich, thick descriptions; typicality; and multisite designs. Each of these strategies and how they were used is fully described in the data collection and analysis section.

Reliability or dependability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). Rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the researcher wishes outsiders to concur, that, given the data collected, the results make sense and they are consistent and dependable. Several techniques to ensure dependability are suggested by Merriam including the investigator's position, triangulation, and an audit trail. Each of these techniques was used in this study and is more fully discussed in the data collection and analysis section.

### *Data Collection and Data Analysis*

The basis for the data in the study was the indepth and personal observations and reflections gleaned from the focus group interviews as well as the personal observations and opinions of the subjects. Before the focus group interviews were conducted, I met with two graduate students who served as my recorders for the sessions. We discussed the overview and the format for the study, reviewed the focus group guide questions, and arranged for refreshments and strategies for the focus groups' success. One recorder was present for the focus groups in southern Oklahoma and the other one accompanied me to northern Oklahoma to conduct the focus groups. The recorders debriefed at the completion of each focus group. By conducting six separate focus groups, triangulation was achieved. According to Merriam (1998), triangulation occurs by "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings" (p. 204). Triangulation is one way in which I established credibility or internal validity.

During the focus groups, participants were asked to explain and clarify their views so the other participants and recorder could more fully understand what was being said. The sessions were audio taped as the recorder and I simultaneously took notes. At the conclusion of the sessions, the recorder reported a summary of key findings and the participants were asked to verify these findings. This procedure is known as member checking, whereby “data and tentative interpretations are taken back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). Credibility was established by using this technique.

When the focus groups were completed, it was time to conduct the individual interviews with chief academic officers from the institutions in Oklahoma. I set up these interviews by telephone. Because of time constraints and scheduling conflicts, only 14 of the 28 officers were able to participate in the study. These 14 individual interviews were conducted with chief academic officers from the two higher education centers, five community colleges, five regional universities, one comprehensive university, and the University Learning Center. By combining the focus group interviews and the individual interviews, triangulation was again achieved.

After the focus groups and individual interviews were completed, the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim and associated with the recorders’ and researcher’s notes, then broken down and categorized through an open-coding process. The data were entered into the computer and categorized with a software program called Qualitative Solutions and Research N6 (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 2002). Specific coding themes and categories were established to address the purpose of the study as outlined in the research questions.

I used peer examination to further establish and enhance credibility. Peer examination is, according to Merriam (1998), “asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge” (p. 204). It was important to me to be able to have an opportunity to discuss my feelings and emotions that might have clouded my judgment during the study. I needed someone who could understand and guide me through steps I needed to take to complete the study. I chose Dr. Al

Turner, Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, as my peer examiner. I felt that Dr. Turner was already familiar with my research and would be completely honest with me in evaluating my findings. He provided me with guidance and gave me valuable feedback.

Dependability was established through several methods. Some of these methods were the same as when credibility was established, including triangulation, note taking, and the transcripts themselves. An audit trail was created and an auditor was used to follow my trail. According to Merriam (1998), “In order for an audit to take place, the investigator must describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry” (p. 207). I chose Dr. John Bedford, who is a faculty member in the School of Education at East Central University, for my auditor. Dr. Bedford is an expert in research as well as distance learning. I provided him access to all the materials, notes, tapes, memos, and transcriptions used by me. Dr. Bedford examined the process of the study and the written documentation for accuracy. He was also responsible for verifying the accuracy of the focus groups and individual interviews. Dr. Bedford maintained that the interpretations and recommendations I had made were all supported by the data gathered (see Appendix E).

Transferability was established through the use of multisite studies; rich, thick description; and typicality. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) described typicality as how typical the program, tenet, or individual is compared with others in the same class, so that users can make comparisons with their own situations. The use of more than one focus group in the state of Oklahoma accomplished this requirement. Multisite design, or using several sites and situations, also helped establish transferability.

### *Summary*

I used a qualitative research design to discover the barriers to implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. I conducted six focus group sessions with “intact groups” of

students, faculty, and administrative staff. I also conducted 14 individual interviews with chief academic officers from institutions of higher education in the state of Oklahoma. Two graduate students served as recorders for the focus groups.

I analyzed the data collected from each focus group and individual interview through a content analysis procedure using QSR N6. The information gleaned from these focus group participants and individual interviews were compared and contrasted to determine the barriers to implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. Chapter 4 presents pertinent findings from the focus group sessions and interviews with the chief academic officers. Chapter 5 contains conclusions and recommendations for further research

## CHAPTER 4

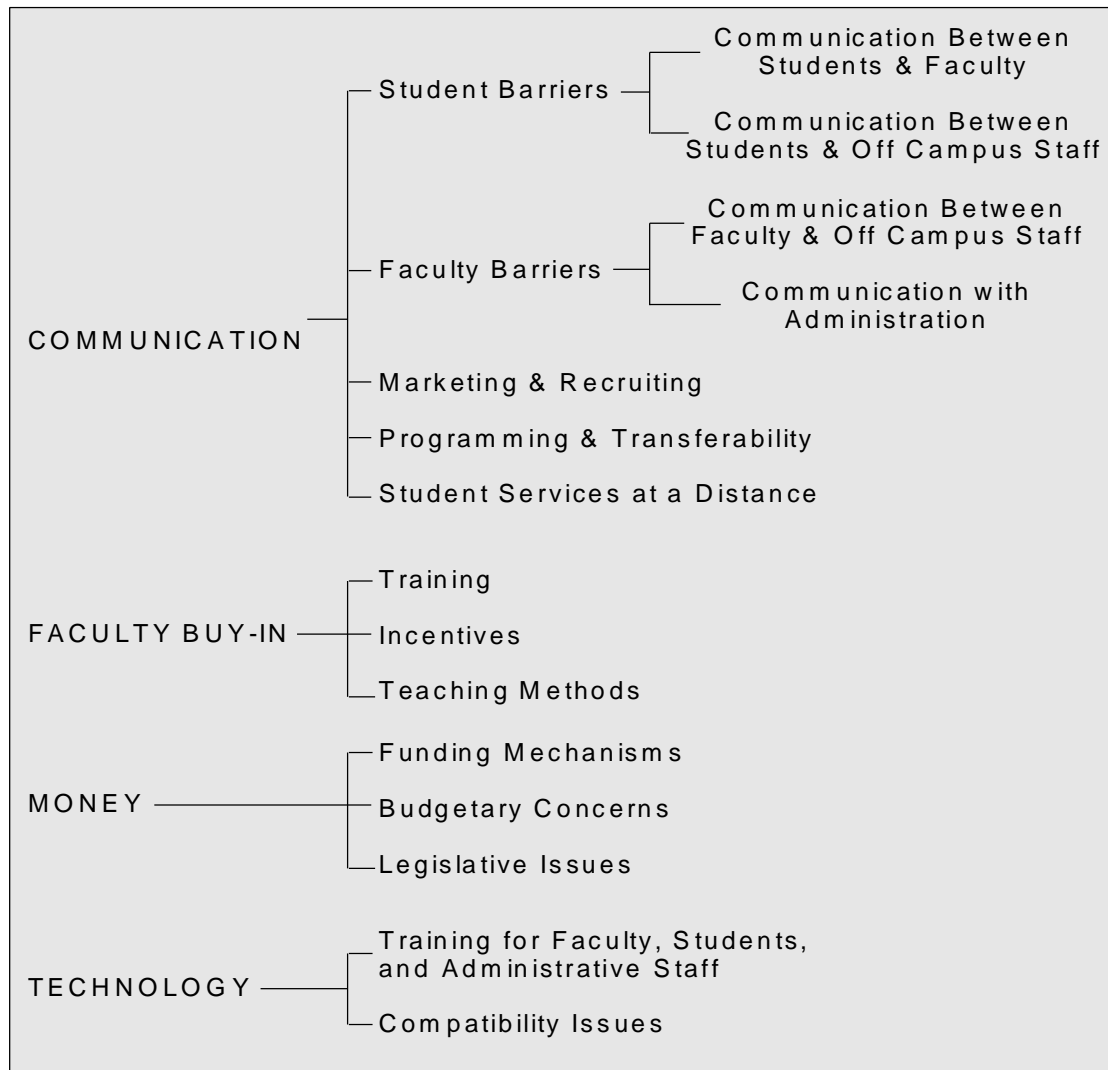
### FINDINGS

#### *Introduction*

The findings from the focus group sessions and interviews with 14 chief academic officers are presented in this section. Each of the focus group sessions was approximately two hours in length. The demographic composition of the focus groups is presented first. Next, a discussion of the pertinent findings from the entire population is presented. This section is divided into four topics: (a) communication barriers as described by the selected population, (b) faculty issues as they described the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative, (c) budgetary issues, and (d) technology as perceived as a barrier (see Figure 6). Finally, a discussion of the barriers based on the focus group interviews and the individual interviews is presented. The data are presented based upon the similarities and differences in perceptions of three different types of focus groups: faculty, administrators, and students as well as the individual interviews that were conducted with the chief academic officers at each of the 14 institutions in the state of Oklahoma.

#### *Composition of the Focus Groups*

The faculty focus group that represented the northern part of the state was comprised of nine males and four females, both tenured and nontenured, from colleges and universities across the northern tier of Oklahoma. The faculty focus group that represented the southern part of the state was comprised of five males and four females who were adjuncts, tenure-track, or full professors and who taught at the colleges, universities, and higher education centers in the southern part of Oklahoma.



*Figure 6.* Presentation of Barriers. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).

The administrative focus group that represented the northern part of the state was comprised of three males and eight females. An even number of six males and females represented the focus group from the southern part of the state. These administrators embodied various positions including student services coordinator, counseling director, bookstore manager, advisor, financial aid director, accountant, and library assistant.

Thirteen students from the southern part of the state and eight students from the northern part of the state made up the students' focus groups. There were 7 males and 14 females, collectively, in these two groups. The students were both graduate and undergraduate students, representing several different institutions across the state of Oklahoma.

Table 5 shows the demographic composition of the focus groups by gender and ethnic background.

Table 5

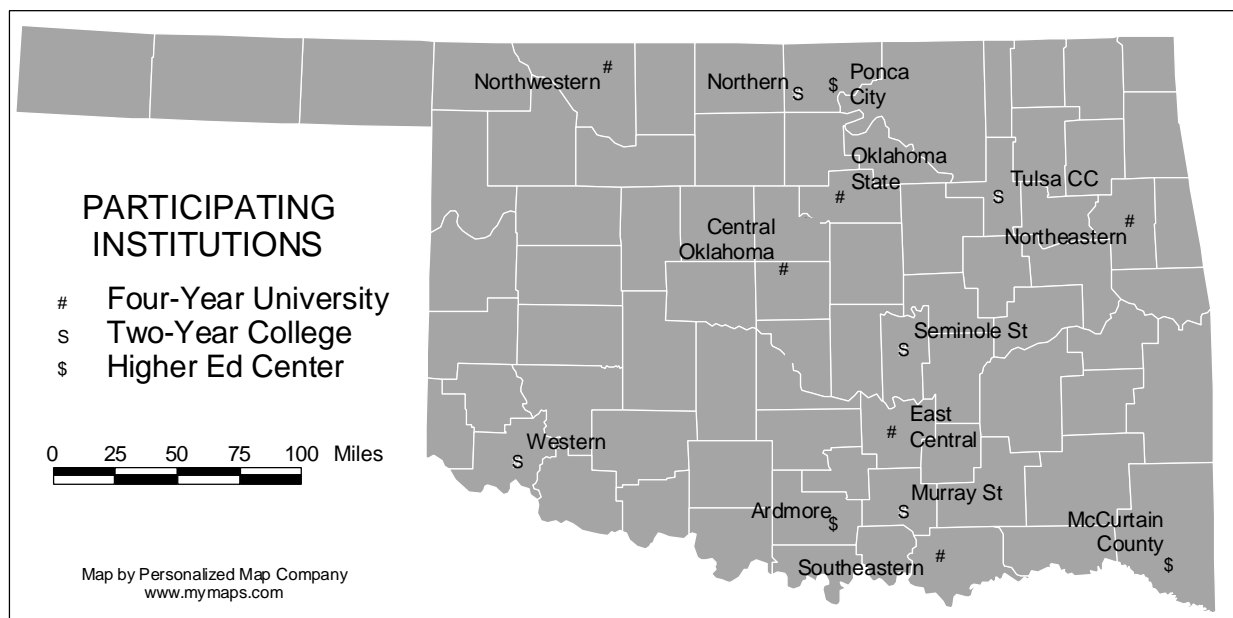
*Demographic Composition of Focus Groups*

Administrative Staff			Faculty			Students		
	North	South		North	South		North	South
Males	3	6	Males	9	5	Males	2	4
Females	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	Females	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	Females	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>
Totals	11	12	Totals	13	9	Totals	8	13
White	10	10	White	10	8	White	6	10
African American	0	1	African American	0	1	African American	0	1
Hispanic	0	0	Hispanic	0	0	Hispanic	1	0
Asian	0	0	Asian	0	0	Asian	1	0
Native American	1	0	Native American	1	0	Native American	0	1
Other	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	Other	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Other	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
Totals	11	12	Totals	13	9	Totals	8	13



### *Composition of Individual Interviews With Chief Academic Officers*

Individual interviews were conducted with 14 chief academic officers from various institutions in Oklahoma. Five community colleges, five regional universities, a comprehensive university, the two higher education centers, and the University Learning Center were represented. The participants included nine males and five females. Figure 7 shows the name, type, and location of each participating institution.



*Figure 7. Participating Institutions. (Created by Dr. Gregory Plumb, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma).*

### *Findings From the Focus Groups and Individual Interviews*

Taped recordings from the focus group sessions and interviews were transcribed and compared to the notes taken during each focus group session and individual interview. Transcripts were converted into text files that were then imported into QSR N6 (Qualitative

Solutions and Research, 2002) qualitative data analysis software. The text files were coded into categories representing emergent themes. The data from the faculty, administrative, and students' focus-group sessions and the individual interviews were then collapsed into four emerging primary topics of discussion. These four topics were: (a) communication, (b) faculty buy-in, (c) money, and (d) technology. These topics were deemed the four strongest barriers as perceived by all participants.

In the following sections, each of the four topics is discussed in detail. There are also direct quotes from members of the focus groups and individual interviewees.

### *Communication*

Communication can be described in several ways. According to Merriam-Webster's (2004) definition, communication is "a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior." Merriam-Webster further defined communication as "personal rapport; a system (as of telephones) for communicating; a system of routes for moving troops, supplies, and vehicles; personnel engaged in communicating; a technique for expressing ideas effectively (as in speech), and, the technology of the transmission of information" (n. p.). Perhaps the word communication itself conjures up reflections of differing definitions for most persons.

As a barrier to implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative, communication was without a doubt the most discussed and prevalent theme throughout the focus group sessions. The topic of communication is subdivided into five categories: student, faculty, marketing and recruiting, programming and transferability of courses, and student services at a distance. Several aspects of communication overlapped one another especially in three specific areas: student, faculty, and marketing.

### *Student Barriers*

During the focus group sessions, the students candidly and openly discussed aspects of communication and how it was a huge factor in selecting and completing degree programs. Within this topic, they specifically discussed (a) communication between themselves and faculty members and (b) communication with off-campus staff.

#### *Communication Between Students and Faculty*

Many students said they felt that the communication between faculty and themselves was very limited when taking courses at a distance. One participant from the northern Oklahoma students' focus group gave her insight about faculty members who seemed disconnected from the students:

I have heard of several teachers who do not wish to teach ITV so we never see them. Those that want to are the ones that we see. [specific faculty member] is wonderful with the students and will set up time to discuss certain problems.

She also discussed her stance of faculty being reluctant to teach off campus, thus creating a chasm at the onset:

I don't know what is going on but I get the distinct impression after talking with some of the people in the office that it is very difficult to get teachers to teach off campus to us. [It's] a lot of extra work for extra money . . . especially the tenured professor.

Another student from the same focus group expressed his opinion regarding faculty's communication with the off-campus students when giving exams:

The biggest problem at the learning sites is that the teachers never get material to the sites in a timely manner, especially, if they are here, they rely on the students to go tell the office when the tests are going to be so they can proctor the tests, get proctors for the test. And half the time the teacher will change his mind and decide not to have a test, or decide that he doesn't need a proctor or he didn't bring his notes with him, so the test is going to be delayed until tomorrow. That causes a lot of consternation and everybody gets mad at the office because they don't know when the tests are; but nobody tells them.

The students in this focus group agreed that faculty members should take the lead and responsibilities regarding making sure exams were on time, proctored properly, and for notifying

the staff that worked with the students at the distant site. Students were adamant about policies being in place to ensure equity in learning. Following are a few quotes from students in the focus group from the northern tier of Oklahoma:

I've experienced the same thing as [another student] where we don't have, like the test didn't make it to this site in time and so the facilitator here is scrambling around, trying to call them over there, get the test faxed to us in time to take the test with the rest of the group . . . It's destructive to the class. I feel like it delays; I feel like there are times that with the late learning you don't get as much information as you want. And, you're sitting there wasting your time waiting for the test to come, which should have already been there. I have experienced that several times, it is very frustrating and it puts the facilitator in a bad position.

Yeah, I talked with one instructor about a class and I did almost feel like I was being recruited for the class, maybe in order to hold the class. It was for a summer class, I think. Now, I really didn't have a problem with that, because on the one hand, I was just getting started as an adult student and he gave me the encouragement I needed.

But I think I would like to see a teacher, an instructor of a class, come down and spend longer than a normal class period at each site, at least once a semester. By the same token, I don't think it is necessary that every class be presented live and in person if they have a good presentation and they tape it. They can present it three times and it doesn't cost them three times the time. But they can use that time and go to the site and spend longer, once a semester, whenever, to visit students.

Another student who was a graduate of an off-campus program at a Tulsa site voiced his opinion regarding the communication between students and the main campus:

We felt in Tulsa that they thought we should be grateful that we have these classes imported to us. And if there were any problems mainly with the audio and visual equipment, it would seem like the instructor and the students that were on the site at [the main campus] would be negative about that--that they were taking time out of their class to fix this audio/visual problem that we paid the same amount of money for. So I felt like even though I was grateful to them to get the degree in Tulsa you know, I felt like anytime I had a class that was audio/visual class or whatever you called it--ITV--there was always a problem with every class with the equipment. We were always made to feel like we had to stop class because we had to do this, we had to do that, for those Tulsa students. That was my experience all through grad school and all of the ITV classes.

It was interesting to note that the students in the southern Oklahoma cohort had similar experiences and feelings about their instructors. Some students considered that their instructors went beyond their duties and others admitted they were very disturbed about feeling

disconnected to the class on campus. A student reported that one instructor continued teaching even though the technology prevented her class from participating. When asked to discuss her perception of student/teacher relationships, she responded:

I agree that I had positive experiences with instructors and staff that I knew. But I had one ITV class and the instructor for that class she . . . I didn't feel like I was part of the class. And she would continue to talk to her class [on campus] when we were having technical difficulties. We didn't know what was going on.

One of the males in southern Oklahoma discussed his experiences in learning from a distance regarding the communication with faculty:

I've taken ITV classes; I've taken Internet courses, I've even taken [live] classroom instruction and it all boils down to this: I guarantee you that there are a couple of instructors out there that knows you're involved in a class in ITV and then there's some that you feel like you're left out there in left field and nobody cares.

A female respondent discussed her positive experiences with instructors and communication with them in southern Oklahoma:

I found them all very positive experiences. I think basically it was the instructors that I had were very well prepared and I think that they were there as facilitators. All of them had taught ITV classes before so they were comfortable with the communications part. And I had a very positive experience with the ITV part.

A female from the southern focus group stressed how important it was for a faculty member who is teaching at a distance to maintain some type of contact with the students at the distant sites, stating:

Whenever I first went into it, I questioned it because you don't have that personal contact with the instructor. Was I going to like that? Would I benefit from the learning process as much, not having that human there in front of me or in the same room with me? And I answered that with, "Yes I did," and also the [institution] instructors that were involved in all the classes made it a point to come to this site and see us at least once during the semester. I think that helped also.

Students were hesitant to take the blame, though, for many of the problems in communication. One student, in particular, voiced the opinion for the majority of the respondents, "I only had one or two ITV classes in the whole career program and it was both with the same instructor, so it was probably just the instructor." Although they refused to take

full responsibility for poor communication, faculty members were quite vocal in defending the students. One faculty member in southern Oklahoma spoke of his experience with some female students and how surprised he was at the students' bonding:

. . . and some of the most interesting connects came about; one group of five females has started a club. Females drive these four wheels everywhere, an ATV group. They said, "We didn't think anybody else liked that." But in their profiles they were able--they could talk about their favorite things to do and they have a club that they do this on the weekends. It has created a whole new bond between students, especially a different kind of student. Some of our students are older and don't feel connected, and that has created a community just in that one class of thirty-two people that I couldn't have perceived six years ago.

Although most faculty members in the state acknowledged that they were required to break down barriers, two groups of faculty members were noticeably dedicated to overcoming communication barriers with students. One group of faculty members from the northern tier of Oklahoma said they felt it was their mission to relate and respond to the needs of their region by teaching at a distance:

Well, it is sort of our mission since we are a rural small university. And part of our mission is to reach out to the students in that area, and so yes, plus it is help; so, that is a part of our mission.

Another faculty member from the same institution expressed his view, "It is a rare challenge too. To take a course on ITV is an even bigger challenge than teaching a course on ITV."

### *Communication Between Students and Off-Campus Staff*

Most of the students had a more pleasant experience when dealing with the off-campus staff. For the most part, the students acknowledged that the staff, such as the advisors, counselors, adjunct professors, and general office personnel, gave them much needed attention and assistance. One student in the northern focus group verbalized how grateful he was to the office staff:

The people in the office--they fall over themselves trying to help. For the years I've been here, they have made it easy for me. I mean, I can just go in and tell them exactly what I want. And even when looking at a course, I can go in and they take the time to dig it out

and tell me what is available. If I have to substitute several classes, then they research which classes fall under each category so I can take advantage of the credit I need to take. They would do it all for me.

A female respondent from the same focus group took classes at the University Learning Center.

She described how the staff had helped her over a period of six years:

I have not encountered any negatives over the past few years and I thank everybody. The faculty as well as the people that work here have bent over backwards to accommodate. In application and registration, they try; they do the best they can. Some of them even take the time off their own, longer than they have to--not only here 3-6; they are here until 9:00. They are trying to accommodate the people that are here. They are trying to make it as easy as possible, because, yes, they do want the students to come.

A student from Tulsa described some advantages of an off-campus site:

I found somewhat of an edge being in an off-campus site because they have fewer students and sometimes we got... we got things done more quickly for us because our staff in Tulsa didn't have a thousand people to deal with like the [institution] campus students did. I never really felt at a disadvantage with any of the services except maybe the library. Our bookstore, we didn't have one, and that was just the way it was. They made all the arrangements for us. They called Barnes and Noble there in town and had books ready for us and we had a couple of classes that the books were on back order for well into the fifth week and it got to be a real problem. But other than that, everything, I thought, went very smoothly being on an off-campus site because there were so fewer people.

### *Communication Between Faculty and Off-Campus Staff*

When faculty discussed their relationships with off-campus staff, they were highly appreciative of efforts put forth for their benefit. One faculty member from the southern tier of Oklahoma described the importance of establishing such a relationship:

The more I got to know everyone it became very beneficial. So the staff seems very open and cooperative, but it seemed very important to me that you establish relationships with them. That way you get to know whom you're dealing with if there are problems. When I first started, I really didn't know to whom I was e-mailing and whom I was sending--you know, different hand outs and what not--to. I didn't know who I was interacting with. If there was a problem it was difficult, but the more I got to know staff here, the more I got to know [other campuses], the more I got to know everyone, it became very much like a partnership; like they were helping, like a liaison. And, it was important to have that.

Another faculty member described the importance of off-campus staff members in regard to saving time:

Related to the relationship between the students and me is that if there is not a facilitator in there, if something breaks down and I don't know who to call, it wastes 15 minutes of class. I added it up one semester, and this is a worst-case scenario, but it happened: Two weeks of class were wiped out by these kinds of things.

A community college faculty member from southern Oklahoma considered that the off-campus staff members helped facilitate learning by having everything ready for the professors when they began the semester:

It is really important that we communicate and have all those things set up. [Staff member] comes in over there now and sets everything up ahead of time and she really does a great job. It has been better since she came.

For the most part, students and faculty alike were satisfied with their relationships with the off-campus staff. The communication between these two groups seemed to smooth over many other problems that both groups had expressed in communicating with each other.

### *Faculty Communication With Administration*

In this area of communication, it appeared that the faculty members were extremely dissatisfied with administration and their management styles. The faculty members spoke frankly about being forced to teach on ITV or on the web. Nevertheless, there were some positive remarks made by a few faculty members. A faculty member from the southern tier of the state reflected on his original reasons for teaching on ITV:

When I first started the ITV, it was only my second year at [institution] and my boss kind of comes to me and is like "Well, you know, we think we might want you to teach one of these classes on interactive TV." To me, when your boss comes to you in your second year and wants to do this, then that's something. He didn't mean to pressure me, but I felt that it was kind of a "this is what I'm going to do" kind of thing.

Another faculty member described her view of administration and the way in which she was instructed by her superiors to reach out to different areas of the state:



I think the biggest obstacle that we have for instruction, at least in Oklahoma City, is administration simply telling us this is something you have to do; period. Because we've been told this is the way we're going, and it's an old management style that if you want it done, you just have to yell louder. Education is from the top down and that's not the way to run it.

At this point in the conversation, many faculty members chimed in to express their opinions on management styles. Politics became an issue, as well as discussion of early intervention in the public schools:

Too many politicians have their hands in it. The initiative has to look at the long-term process and work from the bottom up. It starts at the elementary schools. You don't have any incentive at the elementary level. These teachers are going to be paid \$18,000 a year, maybe \$20,000 or \$22,000 to instruct kids that are out of control and they need to be awarded for the job they're doing. It is so hard to teach at that level, especially the middle school. They should be commended, have the resources to teach these students. And, we get them and we can do a lot of things. So, it has to be from the bottom up. There is too many politics, too many politicians with their hands in it, and the education system is not going anywhere. It has to be from the bottom up, and has to be reformed in elementary schools. The goals have to be changed.

A faculty member from an institution in northern Oklahoma perhaps expressed it best for the group when he stated:

Well, you know, I think that as the ones that are resistant to technology retire, the newer faculty where when you come you know it is part of it--it hasn't been forced on you. I think that helps. But even before, when you had faculty that didn't particularly like it. We remember teaching distance classes, how much better it was for the students if they could get there. But we've just got a great faculty--we always have!

### *Communication as Applied to Marketing and Recruiting*

When asked to discuss their views on marketing and recruiting, it was interesting to note that most participants in the students' focus groups reported that the communities in which they lived did not have enough knowledge or publicity about their programs. A male member of the northern Oklahoma focus group stated:

I think that whenever they quit advertising and mails, I think the barriers sometimes are people not knowing what is available. And that's advertising and making sure that everybody in the community knows about it, what's being offered. But the best publicity they can have is someone coming up to you and telling you that. You can advertise until

you are blue in the face on TV and they are going to just flip it to the next channel because they think it is a commercial. You have someone to come up to you in person and say, "This is a great thing." You, know you couldn't get any better than that. They are going to take it seriously.

The administrative staff was also aware of the need for advertising and public awareness. They agreed with the students on the issue of using one-on-one marketing techniques. Yet, just as the students were wondering how to meet more needs, the administrative staff was puzzled about how to make sure prospective students knew about the programs. Some of the focus group participants who were involved in the consortia at the University Learning Center in Ponca City relayed this message:

Even after all of our advertising--the advertising is mainly on television and newspaper and direct mail--word of mouth...tell students one time or another...1,000 of the hardest. It's still that area that it comes down to--to know what we are. We'll get phone calls. Baby sitters? Do we provide day care when she comes to class? They don't know what we are. And they have done articles, large articles--but still, the general population does not know how we function. Yeah, I think it could be if we could advertise more than what we are ... budget ... we are having to cut back on everything. Getting the word out? I don't know what you have to do to cover everyone.

Most of the chief academic officers had a different view of marketing and recruiting. Because they had been given the charge to make the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative a successful endeavor, their focus was mainly on providing programs and services to the students and communities who were not necessarily being served by another institution. They all spoke highly of other institutions, particularly the ones in their own service areas. Most of them were more concerned with their own barriers to implementation rather than barriers that were seen and experienced by faculty and students at the distant sites. Nevertheless, chief academic officers recognized the efforts by their sister institutions and noted that each had strengths in specific areas. One chief academic officer from a two-year college discussed his staffing and programming from both a sending and receiving point of view, stating, "I would much rather see our sister institutions in here and us helping to broker and to do whatever is necessary to make

sure we serve more than just the first two years of college.” Another chief academic officer of a two-year college had this to say about programming and recruiting:

Most schools have been able to round up the funds and personnel to be able to put together the right kind of courses and ship them out. They are able to reach far greater than locally or regionally. They are reaching around the globe. They are able to reach servicemen over in Iraq, Okinawa, and wherever. Wherever there are people. That’s been a tremendous boon for schools that are able to put together total degree programs.

One chief academic officer from a two-year college had gathered information from another institution and was planning to implement some of those policies. He explained, “Another thing that we have learned as an institution [from this over here] is that it’s probably better to have people that are generalists, not necessarily specialists to go into the registrar’s office and ask questions.”

Several chief academic officers, especially those from the regional universities, were concerned with the organizational structure of recruiting and retaining students. They all agreed that staffing at the distance sites was crucial to serving the student population in their service areas but raised concerns when faced with functions of the personnel and the communication with campus. One chief academic officer expressed his satisfaction in being able to meet demands of staffing off campus:

[I] have to cover the gamut of responsibilities. So, the off-campus staff truly embodies the meaning of cross training. You don’t have to know everything about it to help students, so it is a very nontraditional kind of staffing. And consequently, hiring those people is a very critical function.

Another chief academic officer voiced his concern about institutions not being consistent. He explained, “One of the interesting things to me is that I don’t think that any two of these were organized the same way. It’s been a little bit of a challenge to handle some of these things.”

It was interesting to note that the chief academic officers at the two higher education centers and the University Learning Center were highly supportive of the institutions that served their students, even more than the institutions themselves. However, programming issues were more important to this group, as a whole, than to the other chief academic officers. Following

are some of their comments regarding staffing and programming from their participating institutions:

They want someone who has skills to work with different kinds of people and students here and different circumstances. They may be happy students or they may be disgruntled students. They want someone that's going to be here to proctor their tests and do that with a high degree of integrity to the test and in a way that's fair and equitable to the students as well as to the instructor. It's difficult to work with that many interpersonal, different kinds of skills.

Of course, some institutions do a better job than others providing those services, some that may have to do it with limited staffing, that they are not doing as good a job, but I don't really always know that end of it . . .

### *Programming and Transferability of Courses*

Communication plays a large part in the transferability of courses. Although students made up the main focus group that reported concerns in this area, administrative staff members were also baffled by the amount of paperwork and inconsistency that the state of Oklahoma has in this area. Faculty members did not have much to say on this topic but seemed supportive of students who were trying to progress in their education. One student from the northern tier of Oklahoma questioned why certain courses were offered during certain times:

I don't understand why they have classes going on during the day and classes going on during the night . . . a lot of it is competition. I think it is basically competition between the schools because when I was talking to one of my advisors, that's what they said, "We have made a covenant with the lower educational schools so we will not compete directly."

Another student from the same focus group related his experiences after transferring from a two-year institute to a four-year institute:

I paid \$74 a credit to get them on my transcript and then couldn't use them. Well, I think it was only \$5 an hour when I was at [two-year institute]. Well, literally, I took 96 hours at [two-year institute] and there was some stuff in there that later on I wanted to transfer, and I was still short. Even after the 96 hours. Now you figure: How could that happen? And it wasn't because, you know, I have lots of money to blow and all the time in the world.

Still another student from northern Oklahoma gave some insight and her opinion of administration at the institutions:

But with so many going back to school, more than one college can offer those general education courses and still not end up in direct competition with each other. It's like they think we are a limited population, and with us being a limited population, they offer one here and one there that they are taking away from me. And that's not it. I think it is just that some of those, whoever, administration in some of those schools, they are building empires, they are not being flexible and offering any other courses or programs. And they are all funded by the same state board of regents.

The students from the southern tier of Oklahoma had similar feelings about programming and transferability. A male member of the focus group became quite vocal when relating his frustrations with being able to finish a degree:

I have an issue with the degree itself. If they are offering the degree and they advertise that you can get it here [at distant site], and you don't have to go anywhere else, that every course you need is here to complete that degree--and they don't do that. Not because whether it's an agreement that they have these other schools that they can't offer these lower level courses or whatever; I don't know. But that is not fair to us. We should be able to finish the degree. That is something that needs to be addressed.

Although another male from the same focus group related similar frustrations, he also talked about making sacrifices, "Here you're restricted on what degrees you pursue simply because they don't have the staff available to teach it. If you wanted the convenience of having a satellite site, then you have to make those sacrifices."

Administrative staff members from both the northern and southern parts of Oklahoma were concerned with how they staffed and provided for student support services on limited budgets and with limited faculty members. They agreed that too many people were usually involved in decision making and that procedural problems were still of concern to each of their respective campuses, "The reason we don't have an advisor here is financial and logistical." An administrative staff member from northern Oklahoma described different personalities involved in decision making, especially when communication was concerned:

Now, you know, he cooperates with us when we ask him to do stuff and all of that but, the bottom line is, I'm not his boss. And when there's a problem—sometimes it's hard to

intervene because there are so many other people involved—if they would only let us deal with those types of issues sometimes.

She also discussed the structure of administration and the arrangement that she considered as a flaw in the system. She stated, “So, typical issues of communication and then the administrative structure, or the power structure, if you will, on the branch campus or on any campus. We are still trying to define it, I think.” One male administrator summed up the communication issue off campus by stating:

It seems to me like about 5% of the people cause 95% of the problems. If somebody has taken all their classes in one institution . . . if they’re an undergraduate, have taken all the undergraduate classes or if they have taken all the graduate and things like this, they’re simple. Like this morning, I was faced with some . . . I had a graduate student who was taking 12 hours here on campus already enrolled in that, and then she decided to enroll in 2 hours at [distant site]. Well, one thing, it throws her into an overload. It’s going to have to have approval. The other thing is and I think this is just in-house here, we can’t add her until she pays her other fees. She probably can’t pay her fees until we get her check to her the middle of June. It’s stuff like that, you know? Dual registrations, overload, late enrollments . . . probably the same things that cause problems on campus cause problems off- campus.

#### *Student Services for Students at Distance Sites*

Many of the focus group members expressed great dissatisfaction when it came to knowing how to negotiate the institutions’ many rules and regulations. Students, faculty members, and administrative staff agreed that some type of orientation needed to be provided for the students off campus. The students were mainly frustrated by financial aid and bookstore issues, but they also provided straightforward discussions on registration and other student services.

Once more, the northern and southern focus groups had similar experiences. The bookstore, in particular, was a topic of heated discussion. Students expressed anger regarding their experiences in trying to obtain books. It was not only the price of books, but also the idea that books could be resold for only a minimal amount. They also relayed their frustrations with

getting books in a timely manner and whether they actually used a required book. One male student from the northern tier of Oklahoma said:

Those books are the biggest pain in the butt I have ever had. Because you go to buy your books--you are going to use it one semester. Why buy a brand new one and pay an extra fifty dollars? Well, you go to buy it and they say they are not using it again, so you are stuck getting a new one anyway. And when the time comes to sell it back in at the end of the semester so you might recover just a little bit of the money you spent because the book was never even opened by the facilitator or anything, because it was never needed in the class. And they are not taking it back because they are not using that book next semester.

A female member of the southern students' focus group said, "My only complaint is the first night of class or the first day of class sometimes books were not available from the off-campus site." She continued to voice her dissatisfaction and then offered this suggestion:

I kind of wish they would let us know in advance what books were required for each class because I don't think it matters where you get them as long as you get them. I would prefer a cheaper book than go to the bookstore where the prices are outrageous.

A female member of the southern administrative focus group supported the students' views on bookstore problems:

I think it would be wonderful if there were some way that the institutions could work together to provide book information for students as they enroll in a course. We are often asked in our office about the books they use and when those go on sale, of course. I assisted one of our students who enrolled for the first time in an Internet class at OSU/OKC and who lived in Ardmore. He didn't want to drive there unless absolutely necessary to get the book. The book was not available here.

It seemed like the processes for financial aid and student services were more in-depth for the administrators at the off-campus sites from southern Oklahoma than for the focus group members in the northern tier. Frustrations were apparent and the staff was extremely vocal when it came to providing an equitable type of service to off-campus operations. An administrative staff member of the southern focus group described his dissatisfaction with ITV support personnel:

The only deviation I would make is there are some sites we have sent classes to that don't provide us enough support especially in the evenings. And, that for me is very frustrating because past 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. and our classes go to 9:40 p.m. sometimes, it is difficult

when we don't have full-time support staff at the receiving end to help us coordinate access to our students in terms of materials we've faxed to them or in terms of opening the doors for our receiving site students. That is the area I see that needs some improvement.

Another member of the same focus group voiced her complaints with the registration process for off-campus students:

We've had lots of problems. We've had problems with students being double billed and we've had students in our system who were not billed at all. That is still a tremendous burden. When we input the information ourselves, it was correct for us. I understand there were problems with the other institutions. There were problems with the grades, transmission of the data. There were a lot issues there. Enrollment continues to be a problem as far as reconciliation of hours because of the way it is done. I don't know when that will change.

Financial aid issues continued to be problematic, especially for students and administrators in the southern tier of Oklahoma. A female member of the administrative focus group voiced her difficulty in dealing with students and the financial aid process:

Most of them that come into our office by that time are totally lost. They don't really know because of the way we're set up who their financial aid is coming from. They just know they have financial aid, and we have to start at the very beginning and get to the important questions to get them where they need to go.

A male administrative staff member who was employed by a regional university in the southern tier of the state ended the discussion with this comment:

Well, to me that makes us look bad as far as coordinating with the student whether its [one institution] or whoever it is. I think we're forgetting the student in this and more concerned about the university. That's been the biggest problem we've had doing it the same way. As aggravated as I get sometimes, I think it ought to be all done pretty much the same way.

In contrast, the students and administrative staff in northern Oklahoma were content with their experiences with students' support services. For the most part, they reported being treated the same or in some cases, better, than the main campus students were. One student who had been both an on-campus student and a distance learner discussed her view of student services:

When I was an on campus student in my undergraduate degree, I had far more problems with bookstore, with financial aid, and lines to enroll; to do this, to do that, and in fact I had considered moving during the middle of my program. I went one time to [main



campus] site the day they were giving out the financial aid checks and I just left, whereas in Tulsa I just walked in. So, like I said, at my site at in Tulsa, I had it much better off the main campus.

She went on to describe alternatives for taking classes at a distance:

This is just my own opinion and I'm sure it's different than everyone's here, but I think sometimes when you're an off-site student, you are going to have a little bit different treatment and you do not always have the option of getting in your car and driving to campus. It may not be convenient. There was a time when I needed my financial aid check so bad that I got in my car and drove two hours to pick it up because I needed it that day and I didn't want to wait four days later. And so, I think when you look at it in that context, you can always accommodate around your own life if it is that big of an issue.

### *Faculty Buy-In*

The second barrier that emerged from the focus groups and individual interviews was the issue of faculty members who were hesitant, or at times, resistant, to embrace the idea of providing access to students who were not on the main campus. Most faculty members considered they were already going beyond the call of duty when it came to educating students. Not only did the faculty members discuss their misgivings but the students, administrative staff, and chief academic officers did as well. For the most part, the faculty members expressed a feeling that they were not trained well enough and did not receive adequate compensation for their services. They were also concerned with distance learning and time constraints. According to their interviews, students had become aware of faculty's hesitation. However, there were two regional universities where the faculty members shined. Their students were highly satisfied as were each of their administrators. Those faculty members emerged from the northern focus groups and they were discussed by their respective students and administrators. The discussion on faculty buy-in is subdivided into four categories: training, incentives, teaching methods, and time issues.

## *Training for Faculty*

One faculty member from a regional university in southern Oklahoma reported an incident where the ITV person had assisted him with the technology at the off-campus site when he decided to teach from the distant site:

Suddenly, I'm way down there in this what I consider, "state of the art" room, but I had no idea. I lost probably half an hour of class time while they were deciding to switch me over. To this day, I'm still not quite sure if that was really important or necessary, but I really feel like the instructors, particularly the first timers like \_\_\_\_\_ and me, could have used a little more instruction on just what I was supposed to be doing and how long I was supposed to be telling people.

An administrator from the same institution who provided training for faculty responded to the need for training by saying:

The problem becomes when the faculty doesn't make the time to go to this training, number one. Number two, the administration doesn't provide enough time for faculty to come to this training. When you have training designed every semester, once at the beginning and in between, and faculty--not because they don't want to come--because they have other important things to tend to in their department--there's nothing you can do about it. We're hoping that there will be a better . . . hoping that administration would include in the package when they send out to faculty members that you have to be trained before you go and teach on the OneNet System.

A male respondent from the same focus group expressed his thoughts regarding faculty training:

The logistics sometimes of this is almost overwhelming. You try to set something up. We had a first time faculty member scheduled to teach on ITV. Well, he's scheduled at the same time to be in those training things for all first time faculty members who are new to our school. Which one does he choose? It is frustrating.

Another member shared a possible solution with the others:

In our school, what we're going to start doing with instructors is have a certificate of instruction. Once they finish, they will be given a certificate and if a teacher wants to teach online, or if they want to teach ITV, they're going to have to have a certificate to be able to do that. To me and the people I talk to, we all agree that it's a good quality control measure to make sure that we're not just throwing instructor out to the wolf so to speak.

An administrative member of the focus group in northern Oklahoma stated simply, "If they were more educated in the simpler things to do, I think they might have a little bit smoother

time.” She went on to describe whereas most faculty members were comfortable teaching with the technology, they were not quite “adept” in how to operate the equipment. She reported that the distance courses that her institution received were running smoother because of a technology person’s presence in the room with the faculty. She stated that sometimes the faculty members “don’t even know how to turn the things on or off.” Faculty members in both focus groups agreed that money was the biggest issue in regard to training. One of the males from a regional university in northern Oklahoma stated, “I agree with you all 100% that we need to add more funding for training.” He continued by admitting that there were times in a university setting when it was “just not feasible to include a budget for faculty training in technology.”

### *Incentives for Faculty*

It seemed as if money was the greatest incentive for teaching with technology. Whereas most faculty members overwhelmingly preferred money, that incentive was only one of several mentioned by the participants. One faculty member from a regional university in southern Oklahoma mentioned “the excitement of being involved in something that was innovative.” An administrative staff member from southern Oklahoma described faculty members who teach at a distance:

Of course, there is a little more pay incentive for ITV or teaching at an off-campus site. I have to say though that there are some faculty members who readily accept those kinds of assignments and there are others who are not ever going to do that if they have their way about it.

An administrator from the northern Oklahoma focus group described a situation regarding incentives for faculty:

I’ve actually been through a situation where in the college of business we had a fairly good incentive plan. I think there was a base of \$1,500 to \$2,000 and they would be paid an additional amount depending on the number of students in the class. Then I saw that be taken away and it was a bad thing. There’s a lot of faculty that just said this is not worth my time. I can’t do it. I have 100 students in a session and, you know, I’m not getting any benefit from it--not even release time or anything. So, there was a time when things were a little shaky as far as faculty.

It was during this conversation that different types of incentives began to emerge including inconsistencies in the types of incentives, amount of monetary incentives, and even incentives that were considered for tenure and promotion. An administrator explained why faculty members were hesitant to engage in this type of teaching:

The other thing I know of, any teaching in distance learning isn't considered in promotion or tenure. Really! I mean, the extra student load, any advising they do and stuff, it is just as if it didn't happen as far as promotion is concerned. Just look at tenure—an assistant professor comes in and they are usually young and fresh out of a program. They are much more willing to try new things. And they are also happier to work with technology. It is not as big a change if they start out doing it that way. But, they are also afraid of spending too much time on it if it shows up nowhere.

An administrator from northern Oklahoma discussed her school's policy for course development:

Now, the new policy that was approved last year is not for teachers; it's for course development. The reason for that is for an increase in learning, an increase in retention rates, an increase in students' satisfaction. We strictly approached from the students' perspectives and because of that we have done a paradigm shift in moving from compensation to retention to compensation to course development. Our instruments that developed were based on best practices nationally as internationally, for the videoconference and online courses. Prior to August 2002, our online faculty were not compensated at all for teaching. They were not even compensated for course development, which speaks volumes for our faculty who are early adopters--who went ahead and developed courses, not knowing if there's to be any kind of monetary value attached to it. And so, without any kind of compensation in play, and this is only online, we developed close to 40 courses without a compensation policy. I think it speaks to the professionalism of those faculty members who met the needs and demands of students and program improvement

When the chief academic officers were interviewed, the inconsistency in monetary and other incentives was reinforced. Some colleges and universities paid a certain amount of money for course development, while others paid the instructor for each student who was enrolled in the course. This varied with types of technology. Some institutions paid different amounts for web-based courses and some paid for actually teaching on ITV. One chief academic officer spoke of offering incentives for the instructors to attend professional meetings. Faculty, administration, and chief academic officers were all frustrated by the methods used. It seemed there were policies in place all over the state, but none were consistent.

A chief academic officer from one of the two-year colleges in Oklahoma tried to explain his frustration with the incentive package for faculty members who were involved in distance learning, “I have four pay scales at this time.” He went into detail while describing the four different ways in which his institution compensated faculty members. As he detailed the different levels of pay for designing a course, it became apparent that his institution had taken steps to ensure that faculty would be compensated equitably across the board.

Another chief academic officer from a two-year college stated, “On ITV, we pay \$35.00 per student at a given site.” He then went into a long discussion on how many students would be maximum pay for that particular faculty member but that another faculty member could get “extra money for teaching online--\$50.00 a head.” He also explained that his college paid a different amount for faculty members who developed online courses.

One chief academic officer from a regional university discussed the formula he used to determine monetary compensation for teaching on ITV, web classes, and course development:

We just implemented this—they are paid a one-time fee at their summer pay scale for developing that course. So, if they develop a three-hour course and they are a full professor, they are going to make approximately \$2,000 for developing that course. That’s a one-time fee, though. When they teach it during the year, that’s just part of their load--no extra for that. But, they do get paid for developing the course.

For the most part, learning sites around the state paid faculty for development of courses, although the actually monetary incentive differed from institution to institution. Two chief academic officers discussed incentives, other than money, where their faculty had taken the lead in a nontraditional avenue. One chief academic officer from a two-year college discussed an innovative incentive:

One of the things we are doing right now is to encourage a professional development program . . . to encourage those faculty members to go to conferences or to get instructional online preparation, online classes to go and then are required to give inservice to faculty and staff institution wide.

Another chief academic officer from a regional university related the fact, “At this point we have no incentives for the faculty to develop online courses or any course. We have made

faculty have online courses.” Another two-year institution chief academic officer talked about how they had been able to obtain funding through grant monies to pay for course development. Finally, one chief academic officer from a regional university described several types of incentives that benefited students, faculty, and administration:

For the student, the incentive at the received site is that they save money and time, but not having to travel great distances to a campus. The incentive at the campus level is when we respond to the requests at a received site and actually delivering there. The incentive is getting those stars at the regents’ office. And, more meaningful, you are able to actually meet the needs of students at a local community. And perhaps, perhaps, you increase the enrollment.

### *Teaching Methods*

Some faculty members expressed discouragement in trying to reach students at a distance because of the difficulty of being able to teach in a meaningful way. The faculty focus groups expressed concerns over course rigor, student interaction, and having to teach in a manner in which they were not accustomed. The southern Oklahoma faculty group, as a whole, was quite vocal in defending their rights to decide which courses were suited for ITV or Internet and the quality of the coursework that they had witnessed. A faculty member from a two-year college expressed his frustration:

I learned something before I came into teaching 21 years ago. I was a consultant, environmental consulting for seven years. We often did studies that were called fatal-flaw studies. I believe that we have fatal flaws in this and we need to make sure we are not going to block the student. The purpose of this is for the students to learn. I’ve got a website that has 10 megabytes worth of stuff. I’ve got all my notes; I’ve got all this stuff. That does not mean that is better for the students, and I am just . . . this is what I’m having to face this summer. I’m the last holdout on courses where students can get a degree entirely from--an associate’s degree, completely from Internet courses. But, is it equivalent? Is the quality of that course what it is going to be in other cases and would that transfer to a four-year institution?

Another faculty member in the same focus group who was from a regional university considered his students on campus were not getting the quality of education they deserved. He was very frustrated with the ITV process and all its shortcomings, stating:

On-site instruction is hindered by ITV instruction. The distance folks are probably getting a good deal, but all they're used to is ITV. But, on campus, instruction is hurt. It has diminished its value. Quality isn't there, because you're working with technology; you're watching a TV screen and watching the classroom. The classroom instruction has become more formal instead of informal with no interaction on-site and of course off-site, you're constantly looking away at the TV. I believe that on-site instruction is hindered for my students. It may be different for psychology or English courses, but I believe ITV and using the Internet is discipline specific. It works for some really well, and doesn't work for others. For my discipline, it doesn't; because, it is a very visual, very touchy-feely subject . . . lots of visual aids . . . lots of experiments. I feel that on-site instruction is hindered for on-site students. I've got feedback of that in my evaluations. More than 75% said they would not do it again.

He added, "Here I was working the sites trying to make sure I didn't ignore them, and I didn't even know the class sitting right in front of me!" In contrast, other faculty members, especially in the focus group from northern Oklahoma, were dedicated to teaching on ITV. They said they felt like it was a great opportunity and experience for them to grow both professionally and personally. An instructor added:

I don't teach anything but ITV. When you put me back in the classroom, I feel like my right arm is off. Even though there are things that I would like, I like having the touch of the screen that will project anything I want.

The chief academic officers from all parts of the state agreed that coursework should be kept rigorous but should also be available and accessible to all students regardless of geographic barriers. They spoke of faculty being resistant to change and attitudinal problems from faculty members. One chief academic officer discussed overcoming faculty's reluctance and how that reluctance affects the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative:

Well, I think always the biggest barrier to any distance--whether it's the Oklahoma initiative or any--the biggest barrier is the willingness of faculty to do that. There are a number of faculty who do not believe in distance education, who believe that a quality education occurs face-to-face in a residential kind of format. So, that's the first hurdle to get over. We can demonstrate all we want that programs are needed here and there, but if you don't have faculty willing to do it, it's difficult.

Another chief academic officer described the mindset of instructors and the lack of understanding that the faculty possessed regarding distance programs:

We have a pretty good selection of programs, but I think that there are really--to get to the programs being developed, the barrier behind that is the mindset of the instructors on campus. And you have some go-getters that like e-commerce, where almost everybody is onboard, and they are going gung-ho and are developing everything they can to send to an off site and doing great things. And then you have those you just have to pull--like pulling eyeteeth--to get them to come along. And they stand many times behind . . . Well, my \_\_\_\_ just doesn't get distance education. He just doesn't like distance delivery. I think that the mindset is, they haven't been shown, or they haven't had the opportunity to see, how it can happen. Their mindset is, well I couldn't teach a lab situation over ITV because I have to be right there to see what students are doing.

Another chief academic officer discussed the possibility of hiring faculty with the intention of inserting distance learning into their schedules:

Many faculty members don't see much need for this. They would be perfectly happy just to teach the students who come on campus. But as an institution, our responsibility goes beyond that. And as we recruit new faculty, there has to be an understanding that that's a part of our mission here. We teach on campus but we also have a responsibility off campus, and they are likely to have a mixture of the two.

A chief academic officer from a regional university posed a question dealing with faculty resistance:

We have really not had a lot of resistance, except—I think it would come more in maybe our arts and sciences area. We've had a couple of instructors that didn't want to do this. But when we said, "Okay, can we justify this by not doing this? Testing it? Because this student only lacks a few hours from graduating and actually it's your courses every semester that they lack. Look what we could do if you would offer just one course at the ITV. You know you are going to service another 15 to 20 students by doing that." And that makes their class schedule more conducive to them down there. So, they have been really pretty good about doing it.

Finally, a chief academic officer at a receive site had this to say about faculty and the resistance to provide instruction for distance learners:

I have had other conversations about and with faculty members who have been very resistant to ITV, although they finally really embraced and done it. And who were very resistant to Internet courses and people who as recently as five months ago said, "I would never teach an Internet course," who now have two that they are offering and teaching in their favorite subject this summer to launch for fall. Part of that just goes back to what we know about change theory, and that all will come around in time.



## *Money*

The third barrier that emerged from the focus groups and individual interviews was the issue of money. Although money was certainly a barrier to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative, the discussion could be broken down into two distinct categories:

- (a) funding mechanisms and budgetary concerns as they applied to faculty and staff placements for colleges and universities and as needed for training and upgrades of equipment and
- (b) legislative issues as seen by the chief academic officers of the colleges and universities.

### *Funding Mechanisms and Budgetary Concerns*

When asked, “What is your perception of the impact of the learning sites’ budgets on delivery of courses and services to off-campus sites?” faculty members responded that they felt like distance learning was going to be a positive force in securing the future of education. One female respondent from the southern Oklahoma focus group said, “I think it is going to be our lifeline of survival.” They also discussed the budget in terms of paying faculty extra monies to maintain overloads. A male respondent from the same focus group stated, “I think they will be more likely to pay for overloads rather than have full-time faculty teach them as part of their regular load.”

The administrative focus group, as a whole, seemed more concerned about the “learning site money.” The southern Oklahoma group reported, as did the faculty members, that the money was going to be something to assist the campuses as they tried to reach out to rural communities. One male member of the group stated, “I know this--the receive site money has been a savior to us. It’s helped for some salaries, it’s helped us update equipment, and our receive sites so we can receive more classes.” Another male member of this group helped solidify a statement that a faculty member from another focus group had reported:

It certainly will have an impact. I think one thing that I’m thinking more about now is [what it] would be to do more web-based classes as opposed to sending an instructor especially to a site. That’s an immediate impact on my budget.

The southern focus group brought up the fact that the learning site money was being diminished from budgets at the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. From their discussion, it was apparent that they had been involved in budgetary decision-making processes in their respective colleges and universities. One male member of the group reported:

I heard that learning site funds for this year have been decreased I think from \$100,000 to \$81,000. That's what [our school] told us. Now, whether that in fact happened or not, I don't know. Now, from that, \$81,000 is distributed among all the systems' schools. So, we're going to get a small chunk of change this year probably. That will affect us as far as upgrading equipment, replacing equipment as it breaks down, or equipping new rooms. A lot of schools use that learning site money.

An administrator from the northern Oklahoma focus group was also concerned about the budget being cut and the impact it would have on her university:

When they talk about reduction, basically putting off funding for extension, we worry about if the staff is cut in half. How many students are we going to be able to serve? Growing a program right now is not--because you don't know what you are going to have in a year to help you serve the program. That's a restriction that we have all the time, but makes it more serious when there is talk about cutting, because we have always had that. How many students do we want to admit? How aggressively do we want to market? Because if we jumped 300 to 600 students, it's not a doubling effort; usually it's more like tripling.

She continued:

A major barrier for us is marketing and what we can afford to spend on marketing and deciding on our pool of people that we want. And, as I have understood it, part of the Learning Center Initiative was for them to use part of that money to market their programs. And that's one of the major conflicts we have--knowing whose responsibility that really is. The learning site is supposed to be the provider. That's the market. And, that's really the biggest expense. Because otherwise, once we have students down there, it's a matter of setting up another user in the network. But, getting students--that's a major thing for our program. And I would say, probably—I'm just guessing—across the state, that probably exists for a lot of people.

One administrator from the northern tier of Oklahoma was concerned about how much more her university might cut the operating budget. She explained that because the infrastructure was in place, it would only make sense to fund the distance learning programs and that it would certainly save money for the schools involved:

I think at [regional institution] we have already cut operating to the point where we are not going to cut off much more. So, we are looking at actual programs. I think it is going to affect those more than it will actually [affect] the delivery systems. Theoretically, it is cost efficient if the infrastructure is already in place. It's an expensive infrastructure, but since we already have it in place, it's actually inefficient to not use it. So, that would be my perception. If the technology is in place, the technology is going to be cheaper and cheaper. After enhancement, the technology is much less expensive than it was when we first started at \_\_\_\_\_. Yeah, you can now fund a classroom for \$10,000. So the efficiency, dollar wise, is much better and the efficiency of the equipment, I think, is even better. So, I don't see the funding necessarily decreasing as far as the support. There may not be as much investment, huge capital investment, coming through.

Students, when presented with the same question, had concepts of how funding and budgetary concerns had been important to them. Some blamed the state for taking money away from education and "fixing" roads instead. One male respondent from southern Oklahoma said:

Here's my problem: We don't have the money for our education in Oklahoma; we're laying off hundreds and hundreds of teachers because our state can fix roads that are two lanes through towns and places that have 5,000 people total and that's counting dogs and cats. Where's that money?

However, he went on to surmise:

I think it cuts down on the number of teachers that they pay to travel back and forth. It cuts down on the courses offered; it cuts down on the facility. They would love to expand this facility so they wouldn't have to use the high school, but I'm sure it is not in the budget yet.

In contrast, the students in the northern tier of Oklahoma were more interested in the distribution of the fees they paid each semester: One student stated:

Well, another thing is that, you know that students here, we are paying all these fees to the university--lab fees, all these, all that, and none of that money is funneling out to these places. And I would like to see some of that money for some of those fees come up here, because we are not using their library, and we are not using their picture ID thing, and they are charging all these fees, and we are not getting the benefit of using any of that.

At the same time, these students admitted they were already impacted by the budget.

They spoke of programs like "fast-track" and "accelerated courses" as having been eliminated.

One female member expressed her dissatisfaction with having to wait for up to three semesters

for a certain course to be rotated. Another respondent told of having the option of driving to campus to take a lab or taking it online. She considered it was a ploy to save the school money.

For the most part, students in both focus groups agreed that their education would be affected by the budget. They also agreed that they would figure out a way to get their education, whether that meant taking online courses or ITV courses. Their main concern was if the distance learning programs would persevere until they graduated.

### *Legislative Issues*

When asked about budget concerns, the chief academic officers had one theme in common: to increase funding from the Legislature. Many expressed a desire to better serve a wide variety of students but found their budgets had been cut so much in the past few years that they simply could not afford to offer any more programs. They admitted they were barely keeping their staff hired and faculty slots filled. Some chief academic officers could not afford to staff even very important positions. One chief academic officer from a regional university stated:

Really—I do believe this—the biggest barrier we have is just our funding in general, the fact that we are not able to keep our departments fully staffed with full-time faculty. If we had that, it would be a lot easier to make this a part of what we do. We are going to do it anyway because it is a part of our mission, but I would feel better about the quality of what we are able to do if we had a little better financial picture.

He went on to explain:

One thing that I'm certain will help is an increase in the amount of funding for higher education in general and that would include some of the incentive funding for off-campus offerings. A \$100,000 is certainly welcomed at each of our campuses. But, that really doesn't even cover the infrastructure cost of doing these kinds of things. It certainly helps and we probably couldn't do it without that, but just a general increase in funding for higher education would help more than any other single thing. I think we understand that it is our responsibility to do that, and we are going to do it, but we would like to do it in a quality way. To do that requires some resources.

A chief academic officer from a regional university summed up his feelings with this statement:

So for the budget constraints, I think that as long as we continue with the current budget, then it will allow us to maintain the equipment and provide the support that we need for faculty and for students. When those funds—if and when those funds are reduced—and they have been slightly reduced—then we will make those decisions.

Another regional university chief academic officer simply stated, “Primarily, funding--that’s it.”

A chief academic officer from a two-year college added, “I think the money is too little all the way around to really meet the needs.”

It was interesting to note that the chief academic officers were all in agreement about the funding. One participant from a regional university expressed what the investigator considered a common thread throughout the interviews:

My primary concern is delivering quality programs to students and my insight to the learning site initiative is that it’s a good idea and a good plan. Obviously, it’s underfunded. And we need to find a way to continue to use the very latest technology to deliver a quality program. And I think that’s the greatest challenge, some of the greatest issues we face.

### *Technology*

The final barrier to emerge from the focus groups and individual interviews was the issue of technology. All focus group participants including students, faculty, and administrators agreed that technology seemed to be the way of the future. They discussed the many changes that had taken place and the positive results that upgrades in technology had presented. There were conversations regarding training for faculty, students, and administrative staff. Each member of these focus groups voiced different opinions related to his or her specific use of the technology. The technology barriers are divided into two categories: (a) training for faculty, students, and off-campus staff and (b) compatibility issues and problems with maintaining and upgrading equipment.

### *Training for Faculty, Students, and Off-Campus Staff*

Training for faculty was previously discussed as one of the reasons for faculty not “buying in” to the idea of distance learning. Most of the faculty members in the focus groups had already experienced teaching on ITV or the Internet. The respondents in the southern tier of the state were concerned with being able to answer questions from students and staff regarding problems, if any, that occurred during their classes. One of the male respondents had already spoken to other faculty members who had taught online courses. He voiced his opinion about training:

I’m going to be teaching my first online course next spring. I caught an online class this last semester and my fear is that in terms of technical support, that I’m going to be getting asked a lot of questions. There is going to be difficulty--and I understand from talking with other faculty that for the most part, the faculty will need to understand it. The faculty will need to have their little training sessions at the first class or two to sort of teach them (the students) to do it.

He was concerned that not only did the faculty need training in technology but the students should also be provided with adequate training. A female respondent in his focus group voiced her opinion regarding student training for Internet courses and her reservations about students’ learning in that capacity:

We are under the assumption here that when students log on and get on the Internet and take a course that if they are familiar with the Internet and they think they can do this, fine. But, I really believe from the students I’ve communicated with about Internet learning, they don’t really understand what they are getting into and this is why. Sociologically, the Internet has changed our lives. We’ve developed a different way of thinking and communicating. We think in terms, in characters, and in symbols that are even smaller than we can imagine. We even have little characters and initials. It’s an instantaneous thing. We don’t want to wait 15 seconds to download. All our students are online getting information quickly, spitting out e-mails and letters that are like sentences. There is no punctuation. There is no capitalization. Fine, this is where people have been with the Internet for six or seven years. Now we say you can take an Internet course, but what happens when you get into that Internet course? Is it instant symbols? Is it three or four word sentences? No, it’s a dichotomy. It’s like, this is how I use the Internet. This is how I think. This is the symbol that I use. It’s quick. It’s fast. And then they say you’re going to learn something from the Internet. It’s an entirely different world.

In contrast, the faculty in the northern tier of Oklahoma said they felt comfortable with technology. One male participant, from a regional institution, who considered the faculty had plenty of support and training at his particular institution added, “We don’t have to know all the things--whereas a couple of years ago, it wasn’t anybody’s fault and it was really a challenge. Yes, we are familiar with it, but, fortunately, we are insulated from it now because [support personnel] take care of it so much for us.”

It was interesting to hear what the administrative focus group had to say regarding technology training for students. The respondents from southern Oklahoma were in agreement with faculty members from that same area. A male member of the administrative focus group who was clearly in support of faculty, stated:

I think the developing of the relationship between the faculty and the student is doing more training for our students. We have a tremendous amount of nontraditional students who don’t understand TV/ITV classes, don’t understand web-based classes, don’t know how to use computers, don’t know what it was that they enrolled with--a web-based class. I don’t think they realized . . . we have just so many nontraditional students who have never sat down in front of a computer and yet they’ve enrolled in a web-based class and they don’t even know how to go to a computer, and I think that it is causing a bunch of the strife between faculty and students--not training our nontraditional students on how to use the technology that is available.

One of the chief academic officers from a regional university stated he believed that training faculty members was of utmost importance to the success of the institutions:

Again, you get back into the issue of faculty—well gosh, I’ve never taught ITV. I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to take it over there, because I don’t feel comfortable doing that. Well, that’s where we are educating. We are going to assist you. We ask you to do this and there’s 20 students over there, and we have an option if we don’t want to take it there. That’s one of our service areas. Do we want somebody to come in and offer it? No. Do you want to get into a car and drive over there? No. Okay. So we try to encourage them to do it, but we are going to assist them. We are not just going to stick them in a room. We are going to help them.

Another chief academic officer from a two-year college discussed the funding of technology and how different entities had developed programs to serve many kinds of students including those in high schools and technology schools. He emphasized the collaboration

between the schools and added, “ You can put the hardware in and it can gather dust if no one knows how to operate it, how to keep it running.” Another regional chief academic officer offered insight by saying, “I think there also needs to be a tremendous amount of additional training on the part of technicians, faculty, and of receive-site people.” One administrator from the northern part of the state summed up her thoughts by saying:

That’s where people, I think, haven’t been very creative. They’ve been rather stagnate in distance education because I don’t believe there is subject matter that I’ve seen that just could not at all, part of it be taught. There’s a lot of people out there that have been getting those—and a lot of things is probably just lack of training. They probably haven’t seen what could be done. I’ve seen this in a lot of different places. I think that a lot of times we will have sessions for instructors on how to train, how to use the things, how to use the equipment, and so forth. I think training is a big thing and we probably don’t do a good enough job of that in higher education.

Finally, a female chief academic officer put technology training into perspective:

Each institution probably has something that they handle or do a little better, you know, than another institution. And I think overall for all the institutions--we could say everyone that’s entering into this arena--what some of this learning site money should be used for would have been instructional design. And people often have all of this technology at their fingertips, but they are not prepared for what could go wrong.

### *Compatibility Issues and Maintaining and Upgrading Equipment*

A common theme in the discussion of technology was within the area of equipment. Whether the discussion turned to upgrades or technical difficulties, all of the participants were extremely vocal on this subject. The faculty expressed dissatisfaction with technical difficulties and the time constraints of these difficulties.

One male faculty member from a two-year college in the southern Oklahoma focus group relayed this message, “It’s distracting. It’s distracting to the students. It’s distracting to me, but, I can do it.” A regional university faculty member in the same group went on to explain that he was so disgusted with the ITV process at his institution that he refused to teach on ITV ever again. Even so, he had not completely given up the idea of serving the students and providing education to a larger population. He had a plan for the next semester even though the past



semester had been very stressful for him, “I’m not doing ITV next spring. I’m doing distance learning, but I’m trying a different method. Different methodologies and technology may work for different disciplines.” The respondents were able to vent their frustrations within the group and one finally came to this conclusion:

I did my own survey thing over here. I found exactly what they said the ones on campus found. It very distracting and it interfered. The ones over here all really wanted the course. They would take it no matter how miserable or bad it is, but their main concerns were, it was...there was lack of control of the class. They could not hear what was going on. I’m talking about the good students that couldn’t hear what was going on, for talking and we cannot prevent that without a solid facilitator and the fact that they couldn’t see the resolution thing on the screens were some of the main things.

Apparently, the professors in this focus group, although they cared very much about all the students, were mainly concerned for the welfare of the students on campus.

The administrators, in contrast, were concerned about upgrades and fallacies in equipment. One administrator from a regional institution in the southern Oklahoma focus group gave his vision for the future of technology:

What I would love to see is for each institution to have comparable systems. If we’re all going to use a VS4000 we’ll all use a VS4000 instead of having VS4000 here, FX here, VS4000 here. It screws the whole activity for me and is a big problem. That’s what I would like to see--compatibility with equipment and software so we could all go to bed and sleep easy.

The administrative focus group in northern Oklahoma had a different view on technology. They reported that their problems had been alleviated and they were grateful to be free of the past difficulties. One of the males in this group spoke positively regarding this matter:

Well, with the advent of polycom, which is really kind of bringing us all on the same page...before then, we kind of had . . .you know, heads or tails, details, a lot of different things which kind of led to a lot of compatibility problems. But, it seems like the polycoms have less problems as far as transmission. They are easier to fix, quicker, than having to reboot the system or anything. They seem like everything goes a little bit smoother as far as the speed and everything and clearness of the picture.

He went on to say that he thought they still had small problems but not as bad as they were previously. Another area for improvement involved a simple task. Apparently, the northern tier

of the state was not communicating as well about technology issues as the southern tier of the state. He suggested:

Well, definitely, one thing I wish I would have a list of contacts for other off-sites where I could get hold of another off-site. You know, sometimes they will come on and their microphone will be extremely loud. It really knocks you over. Just tell them over the deal, your microphone is too loud. You know, they don't do anything about it. You have to turn their side down anytime you talk and then turn it back up, things like that.

Another administrator from that focus group agreed that problems were fewer because of new technology:

I tell you, we have not had near the problem that we had after that because we don't have to go through OneNet. It's direct, so it has actually improved. It's really helped us because we were having problems all of the time, and now we don't have near—I mean we may still have glitches, but not the problems we've had. That's also enabled us to be a lot more flexible, so I think from the standpoint of having major glitches, it has probably eliminated a lot of problems for us by not having to route through OneNet and through the hubs and that type of thing.

Yet another administrator from the northern focus group considered that the institutions would never get to a point where they were using technology 100% without having to upgrade:

I don't think there has ever been a semester that hasn't been riddled with technical problems at the beginning of the semester because of upgrades or change in process, change in the provider of the network whatever it is. Something always goes wrong. And my opinion, as an administrator, I don't care what kind of tools you have, if you are not working at 99% reliability, you're wasting your time. And don't ask me for any more money to buy equipment because you can't use this stuff you have. And I understand, you know, the side of the technology manager wanting to have the latest and greatest of everything, but what it boils down to . . . if the person can see someone on the screen and can respond to them when they are supposed to, it doesn't matter about the microphones, as long as they can hear them when they need to and see them when they need to.

A chief academic officer of a two-year college made another interesting comment. In discussing reasons for the barriers in Oklahoma, he surmised that a major problem with the technology issue was the person in charge of technology at each institution. He made this surprising comment:

There is a level of attitude in a lot of ITV people; it's a control issue. And if you know some of them very well, you know sometimes the IT people won't let somebody else "be smart enough to run the equipment." There's this over zealousness, over controlling

factor that says, “Nobody’s going to touch it but me.” There’s plenty of capable people out there, but some people won’t let loose of their equipment and so on, to let other people go ahead and work on it. Granted, obviously there are people that mess things up; but, you have trained people, too. All you have to do is show them how to do things.

### *Summary*

This chapter presented the discussion of the findings reported by the respondents in focus group interviews and individual interviews on the topic of barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. It provided a detailed description of the four barriers that emerged from the study: communication, faculty buy-in, money, and technology. In addition, it contained interview excerpts from the participants in six focus groups and 14 individual interviews.

From information gathered in the focus groups and interviews, it appeared to the investigator as though the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative better served the rural communities and students in the northern part of Oklahoma than the communities and students in southern Oklahoma. It also appeared as though faculty and administrator’s satisfaction was higher in northern Oklahoma. The persons involved in the northern tier of the state appeared to be reaching the goals of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Legislature. This finding seemed puzzling to the investigator and presented the most significant of all the findings. The chief academic officers in all areas of the state, however, seemed to be willing to promote cooperation and collaboration among the institutions. This was the intent of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative from the beginning. One of the chief academic officers posed a question regarding Oklahoma’s goals:

Simply overcoming the historical culture of Oklahoma’s higher education, which was that we all have our service areas and you have to get permission to go elsewhere. Clearly, we need to turn out more people with higher degrees. It’s a worthy goal. The state needs more educated people if we are going to compete in the 23rd century economy. So, whether we get there or not is not the question. The question is are we trying to get there. And after we get there or don’t get there, then the next question will be, will those institutions that helped us get there be rewarded and those who didn’t do their part be punished?

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceivable barriers to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative across five community colleges, five regional universities, a comprehensive university, the two higher education centers, and the University Learning Center in Ponca City, Oklahoma. This study examined the barriers that chief academic officers encountered with implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. The study was conducted through a qualitative research design using qualitative data collection strategies. Focus groups were conducted with students, faculty members, and administrative staff members from various institutions across the state of Oklahoma. These groups included populations from both the northern and southern tiers of Oklahoma. Six focus groups were conducted with two focus groups each of students, faculty members, and administrative staff. Individual interviews were also conducted with 14 chief academic officers from various institutions across the state. Individual interviews were conducted with representatives from five community colleges, five regional universities, one comprehensive university, two higher education centers, and the University Learning Center at Ponca City. The description of the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes concerning the barriers as shared through focus group and individual interview process formed the basis of the study.

Transcripts of taped interviews were coded into categories. The data from the faculty, administrative, and student focus group sessions and the individual interviews were collapsed into four emerging primary topics of discussion. These four topics were (a) communication, (b) faculty buy-in, (c) money, and (d) technology. These topics were deemed the four strongest barriers as perceived by all participants.

Although there was information available in the literature regarding barriers recorded by students, faculty, and organizations in distance learning, there was minimal information available concerning the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative and the barriers perceived by specific groups or individuals in the state of Oklahoma. The research conducted in the study is significant because the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma State Legislature is continually seeking ways to overcome barriers that prevent growth and development to make Oklahoma competitive for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century both educationally and economically (Oklahoma State Regents, 2003).

Brain Gain, 2010 (Oklahoma State Regents, 1999) and Oklahoma's EDGE (Oklahoma State Regents, 2003) are two programs that were implemented through collaborative efforts of the Oklahoma State Legislature and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Both of these programs have teamed economic entities and higher education to combine the innovative technical strength of colleges and universities with the practical experience of economic development professionals. An ambitious goal has been set for Oklahoma: to develop an integrated, innovative, and focused action plan to provide a new competitive edge in the global economy.

The following conclusions should be reviewed and interpreted in light of the following caveats: (a) the focus groups and individual interviews did not include representation from every institution in Oklahoma and (b) the study did not include opinions from state economic development professionals.

### *Conclusions*

The general conclusions of this study concerning barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative are supported by key components of the literature. These conclusions support that this research was a legitimate study based on how students, faculty, administrative staff, and chief academic officers perceived and interpreted barriers to serving populations in

Oklahoma through distance learning. The specific findings of this research were organized under four basic topics that emerged from the data analysis process: (a) communication, (b) faculty buy-in, (c) money, and (d) technology. It is from this information that the perceptions about the barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative, based on the research questions as presented in Chapter 1, emerged. Although research question #1 (What are the perceivable barriers to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?) is the primary question in this study, the remaining research questions were also addressed during the individual interviews with the chief academic officers. Collaboration and cooperation between and amongst the state institutions and recommendations for further research were also identified.

#### *Barrier One: Communication*

Barrier one was congruent with Repman and Logan (1996) in the context of communication between the learner and the instructor. This type of barrier was related to the fact that distance puts both students and faculty in new and unfamiliar roles making them uncomfortable with presenting information they otherwise would not struggle to transmit. Communication barriers in the study was collapsed into two categories: (a) communication between students, faculty, and off campus administrative staff and (b) communication as it applied to marketing and recruiting.

*Communication Among Students, Faculty, and Off Campus Administrative Staff.* Both students and faculty found it difficult to communicate when taking classes at a distance. Students, for the most part, found the classroom disturbing and distracting when trying to learn at a distance and reported they felt somewhat disconnected from the main campus or sending site. According to several students, some faculty members were hesitant to include distance learners in classroom discussions and this made students feel isolated and alienated from students on

campus. Feedback was not prompt in some cases; in the students' opinions, concern for them was minimal.

Some faculty members admitted their preference for teaching to a traditional audience on campus. They too considered that their classrooms were disconnected from the distant students. One faculty member, who had taught on ITV for only one semester, actually refused to teach with that medium again, although he was willing to try to accommodate distance learners on the Internet.

Some faculty members were to be commended for their outreach efforts. These particular faculty members had been teaching at a distance for several semesters and said they felt quite comfortable with technology. Some of them actually preferred teaching at a distance.

*Marketing and Recruiting.* Administrative staff and students viewed marketing and recruiting differently. Although most participants agreed that communities could use more information on programs, students were vocally undecided when discussing their own programs' requirements. Students clearly did not understand program rotations and time issues involved in decision making at the institutional level.

Chief academic officers were focused on providing programs and services to students and communities that were not necessarily being served. They were remarkably considerate and spoke highly of their sister institutions. The investigator was able to glean information regarding several new agreements that were in effect in all areas of the state and in much-needed programs, such as allied health and nursing.

#### *Barrier Two: Faculty Buy-In*

The second barrier paralleled the literature of Galusha (1997) concerning faculty buy-in. In general, this study established that several factors contributed to faculty members' reluctance

to participate in Oklahoma's learning site initiative. These factors included: adequate training, incentives, and teaching methodology.

*Adequate Training.* According to Galusha (1997) training is imperative to distance learning and often there is little or no training for faculty members. Often, faculty members lack the skills and knowledge to conduct a successful distance-learning class. Faculty members in Oklahoma were not an exception to Galusha's findings. In this study, faculty members agreed that training would greatly increase the success of teaching an ITV course. Faculty members in the southern tier of the state said they felt as if they received less than adequate training before beginning an ITV and/or Internet course. However, faculty members in the northern tier of the state acknowledged that adequate training was provided and therefore contributed to a positive experience when teaching an ITV and/or Internet course.

*Incentives.* Faculty members admitted they did not feel that adequate compensation was provided to them in comparison to the additional time and effort that goes along with teaching an ITV and/or Internet course. Incentives differed from institution to institution and the faculty members in this study agreed that incentives should be standardized throughout the state. The study revealed that inconsistent incentives were offered for faculty to teach ITV and/or Internet courses. Incentives included out-of-state professional development opportunities, additional monetary compensation, tenure and promotion, or nothing at all. Whereas each institution in this study had an adopted policy for faculty incentives, the policies were not consistent throughout the state.

*Teaching Methodology.* Faculty members agreed that course rigor when compared to traditional classrooms was jeopardized in an ITV and/or Internet course. Faculty members strongly opposed the lack of participation by the faculty member when the selection of courses



for the ITV and/or Internet occurred. The southern-tiered faculty members strongly agreed they should be closely involved in selecting courses for ITV and/or Internet delivery. They stated that many courses are not suited for ITV and an Internet type of delivery method; therefore, content and rigor might be compromised as a result of not including faculty in the selection process.

### *Barrier Three: Money*

The barrier identified in this study mirrored the literature of Yap (1996) who identified cost as one of the most common barriers in the organizational areas of distance learning. McNeil (1990) also discussed technology funding as a barrier to distance learning. For the purpose of this study, money has been broken into two categories: (a) funding mechanisms and budgetary concerns and (b) legislative issues.

*Funding Mechanisms and Budgetary Concerns.* Focus group members who participated in this study all agreed that adequate funding for the Learning Site Initiative is vital to the long term success of education in the state of Oklahoma. Faculty members expressed concern over provisions for adequate compensation for the additional workload of nontraditional delivery methods and expectations placed on them to do “more for less.” Students showed little concern, due to lack of knowledge about the Learning Site Initiative, but did voice a fear of being taught by adjunct faculty members rather than actual university professors as well as being assessed increased out-of-pocket fees for nontraditional delivery methods. Administrators were concerned with “Learning Site” money itself and how that money might be used at their particular institution. Budgetary issues were of utmost importance to this group as they reached out to rural communities.

*Legislative Issues.* Chief academic officers across the state were primarily interested in funding from the Oklahoma State Legislature. As referenced in the literature, the Oklahoma

State Regents for Higher Education has the constitutional power for the fiscal and academic operation of the public institutions of higher education (Duke, 1984). The legislature appropriates a lump sum to the regents, who, in turn, allocate funds to the higher education institutions. Most of the chief academic officers expressed a desire to serve a wide variety of students but found that their budgets had been cut to the point of depletion from the pittance of money allocated to them via the Oklahoma State Legislature.

#### *Barrier Four: Technology*

Oklahoma has been recognized for quite some time as a leader in educational telecommunications (Millard, 1991). Moss (1998) pointed to a tradition of system coordination and planning that allowed the state to be among the first to develop a state system of educational telecommunications. Quality of educational offerings in extension and correspondence study was one of the concerns that led to the formation of the Oklahoma state system (Oklahoma Higher Education Responds, 1986). With this in mind, technology was, not surprisingly, a topic of discussion amongst all the focus groups and interviewees. For the study, technology as a barrier has been divided into two distinct categories: (a) training for faculty, students, and off-campus staff and (b) compatibility issues and problems of maintaining and upgrading equipment.

*Training for Faculty, Students, and Off-Campus Staff.* With the advent of technology, students, faculty, and staff have each had to endure new ways of thinking and teaching. Many faculty members said they felt uncomfortable with technology, as did many students. More often than not, training was at the forefront of each discussion. Faculty members reported they did not receive adequate training. Students said they felt like faculty members should know how to operate equipment before attempting to teach. Faculty members recognized that students could not learn in an environment that was distracting and disruptive. Administrative staff was not trained to deal with off-campus technology jargon. Creativity in teaching ITV courses as well as

Internet courses was also one of the concerns for administrators. Again, there was a significant difference between faculty and students' attitudes in different parts of the state. It seemed that the technology training was above adequate for everyone in the northern part of Oklahoma.

*Compatibility Issues and Maintaining and Upgrading Equipment.* Equipment was the second area that was widely discussed in the study. Upgrades and technical difficulties plagued many of the institutions and their constituents. Students as well as faculty members were clearly irritated when technology failed. Time constraints under which faculty members had to operate were magnified by the breakdown of technology, either in their ITV classes or in Internet courses.

Frustrations were evident in administrative staff members, as well. Upgrades in equipment were appreciated but were still noticeably needed in many parts of the state. Again, the groups in the northern tier of Oklahoma seemed more comfortable and confident in the use of technology than the southern Oklahoma groups.

The chief academic officers addressed the remaining research questions when discussing their roles in providing programs and services for students at their distant sites. All of the chief academic officers were quick to answer research question #1 (How has intercollegiate competition been impacted?) by stressing their willingness and dedication to collaborate with sister institutions. Although a few discussed a healthy competition amongst the institutions, most were extremely satisfied with serving their own constituents with the assistance of other institutions when asked to provide programs not offered. They also addressed research question #6 (How has the Learning Site Initiative impacted the relationships between regional universities that may be in the same geographic service area?). Several institutions were able to provide new programs and develop new relationships within their own service area. Some of those programs were in nursing, business, languages, and allied health.

Although faculty members reported that they felt they were not trained properly, for the most part, when asked research question #4 (How were faculty members involved in decision making for each school?), both faculty members and chief academic officers answered congruently. Most of the time faculty members were asked to make recommendations when offering courses at a distance. Chairpersons and deans made recommendations based on faculty members' workloads and requests and academic vice presidents approved their requests.

Student satisfaction, as well as staffing for off-campus services, was addressed in research question #5 (Have administrative support services [registering students, collecting tuition and fees, providing bookstore services/distributing learning materials] and student support services been provided for each learning site? If so, who is responsible for them?) and research question #2 (What are the perceptions of the chief academic officers on traditional staffing when trying to deliver programs to learning sites?). The chief academic officers described staffing as being "nontraditional" and "extremely crucial" at off-campus sites. Although they were admittedly stretching the "learning site money," most agreed that support services for the distant learner must equal, if not exceed, the services that are offered on the traditional campus in order to maintain the enrollment and FTP that those students provided.

Research question #7 (At the institutional level, who plans for program review policies and decides whether the institution should consider collaborating with other institutions to develop joint programs, courses, or modules for both distance and on-campus delivery?) and research question #8 (Who is accountable for the scrutiny and academic standards and outcomes?) were both answered when the chief academic officers discussed their roles as academic officers. They all reported that responsibility was ultimately within their auspices but admitted that they delegated much of the programming matters to the respective program directors, chairpersons, deans, and committees. All expressed the primary concern of quality programming.

The final research question (What kinds of incentives are offered to both the receive site and the institution that is providing the courses?) brought about great discussion on the Learning Site Initiative's money and how that money was being used. As discussed previously in the study, this issue was a barrier reported by all the stakeholders. More often than not, the interviewees concluded with this statement: "The regents need to fund this initiative for us to be able to do it in a quality way. We can only do so much with so much money!"

### *Summary*

This chapter presented the barriers that emerged from the collection and analysis of the data. Four barriers were identified; evident in each barrier was a sense of collaborative effort on the part of students, faculty, administrative staff, and chief academic officers from many institutions across the state of Oklahoma. The four barriers identified were (a) communication, (b) faculty buy-in, (c), money, and (d) technology. Of these four, communication seemed to be the barrier that presented the most problematic issues. The investigator sensed a collaborative effort on the part of all institutions involved and implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative seemed well underway. There was a sense of better training for faculty and students and above average faculty buy-in as evidenced in the focus group interviews in the northern part of Oklahoma.

### *Recommendations*

Oklahoma is on the forefront of economic and educational growth. With Brain Gain 2010 (Oklahoma State Regents, 1999) and Oklahoma's EDGE (Oklahoma State Regents, 2003) calling for a partnership between the higher education communities and economic workforce, the tone is set for vibrant, highly qualified, highly educated citizens in the future. The partnership between the State Commerce Department and higher education produced a goal to combine the innovative technical strength of colleges and universities with the practical experience of

economic development professionals (Oklahoma State Regents, 2003). Much of the growth in the state will depend upon telecommunications and distance learning strategies. It is pertinent that higher education serves the rural communities and provides services and programs that will prepare Oklahomans for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the key strategies to achieve the state goal of increasing the number of Oklahomans who are earning a college degree requires that institutions reduce the within-state variation in educational attainment. The barriers discussed in this study have revealed limited accessibility to the various populations. The following recommendations should be considered as they relate to the four barriers of communication, faculty-buy-in, money, and technology:

1. Institutions should provide adequate means of communication between faculty, staff, and students. Specifically, the southern tier of the state should consider collaborating with the northern tier of the state in terms of reaching out to the rural communities and their students who are at a distance. A sense of belongingness could be developed by implementing mentoring programs for new faculty and students who are learning at a distance.
2. Faculty training is imperative to retaining quality faculty members who are willing to teach at a distance. Although the northern tier of the state has adequately trained faculty, more training is needed for faculty in the southern tier of Oklahoma. Mentoring programs should be put in place for new faculty members. These could include outstanding novice faculty who have taught in a distance-learning environment who would be willing to lend first-rate advice to new or hesitant faculty members.
3. Incentives for faculty should be standardized throughout the state. Most faculty members, when faced with new challenges, are willing to participate if the playing field is equal. Incentives should include other rewards that are meaningful to faculty such as time release or the ability to attend professional conferences.

4. The educational community should make every effort to combine forces and make the public aware of the need for more funding for education. Although efforts are in place to increase funding for the K-12 public schools, higher education is lagging. There is still an acceptance of the opinion that higher education faculty and staff members are well compensated and should be satisfied with the status quo.
5. Efforts should be made to update technology in a timely manner. Technology should be compatible throughout the state. When technology equipment breaks, students who are learning at a distance should be able to receive coursework comparable to that of students' on-campus.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

The findings of this study provide a basis for additional research in several areas of barriers to distance learning in the state of Oklahoma. While the barriers that emerged were general and broad, each of the following areas should be examined:

1. A deeper investigation into each of the four emergent themes could yield valuable findings that could further advance Oklahoma's goals and objectives related to the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. In particular, the theme that indicated concerns for communication between students and faculty and the disengagement noted by both should be examined carefully. An analysis of how such attitudes affect learning would be of great interest. Further, an examination of how they each accommodate such communication barriers could be useful.
2. With increased pressure on higher education and the economic policy makers in the state to collaborate, questions should be raised to economic leaders regarding the effectiveness of programs that are already in place to provide Oklahoma with economic growth and development.

3. Attitudes of students, faculty, and administrative staff should be studied to determine the differences between the two segments in the state of Oklahoma. Because there was incongruence between these participants, further research is warranted in this area to validate inconsistencies and gain an insight into the reasons for this gap.
4. Further qualitative research on the remaining colleges and universities in the state of Oklahoma would be useful to determine whether barriers to the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative are reflected in this study.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Cover Letter

Dear Student:

I am conducting focus groups interviews at the University Learning Center for my doctoral dissertation. You have been recommended and selected as a student, who is currently involved or has been in the past, in distance learning. You will be in a focus group with other students from the surrounding area, who have attended institutions of higher learning that are a part of the University Learning Center consortium, which serves students in the Northern Oklahoma area. I am respectfully seeking your expertise and experience in distance learning activities for my interview. I have scheduled a focus group interview for Wednesday, July 23, 2003, at 5:30 P.M. I will be providing a light dinner before the interview session. The session itself will only last for 1-2 hours. I have attached the narrative description of my research and a participant agreement for you to read and sign. I am requesting that you bring the signed participation agreement with you to the focus group session. A person from the University Learning Center will be calling you to confirm your participation. Please e-mail me and let me know one way or the other if you can participate. I hope that you will be able to attend and am looking forward to your response. Thank you for your consideration and help.

Sincerely,

Robin L. Plumb

---

### FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of this research is to provide information for a dissertation by Robin Plumb, ED.d candidate, at East Tennessee State University. The title of the dissertation is Barriers to the Implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative.

I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director. I may contact Robin Plumb at 580-220-2866. I may also contact the Institutional Review Board, East Tennessee State University, Box 70565, Johnson City, Tennessee 37614-1707.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

If yes is your response, please complete the following. Providing your gender and ethnicity is voluntary but will be helpful in analyzing the study.

Gender

Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_

White/Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_

Mexican American/Chicano \_\_\_\_\_

African American Black \_\_\_\_\_

Puerto Rican \_\_\_\_\_

Native American \_\_\_\_\_

Other Latino (a) \_\_\_\_\_

Asian American \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address you prefer the researcher to use:

---

Phone Number you prefer the researcher to use:

\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Number \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Focus Group Questions and Moderator's Script

#### Moderator's Script:

Looking at Barriers in Implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative

#### WELCOME

“Good [Morning, Afternoon, or Evening] and welcome to our focus group session. Thank you for taking the time to join us in discussing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. My name is Robin Plumb and I am affiliated with East Tennessee State University as a doctoral student and also as an employee of the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education. Assisting me today is Dr. John Bedford, who is also employed by an institution in Oklahoma. Let me begin by briefly discussing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative.

We want to hear from you, as peers and personnel of our state's higher education community, about what you see as strengths and weaknesses in our efforts to reach out and deliver education to Oklahoma's citizens. We have invited people representing different parts of the higher education community to share their thoughts and ideas about issues related to improving our outreach efforts. We want to know from you what makes our outreach efforts work well and how it can be improved.”

“You were selected because you have all participated in the outreach process and you are experts in this area. We hope to learn a great deal from your thoughts and opinions.”

## OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC---WHY YOU ARE HERE.

“—[Today, or This Evening]—we will be discussing your thoughts and opinions about the issues that are involved in outreach efforts by the colleges and universities in this state. There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view, even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that we are interested in all comments, positive and negative and that at times negative comments are helpful.”

## GUIDELINES OR STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE GOOD DISCUSSION

"Before we begin, let me suggest some ground rules that will make our discussion more productive. We'll be on a first name basis. Please speak up—only one person should talk at a time as we are tape recording the session because we do not want to miss any of your comments. However, in our later reports there will NOT be any names attached to the comments. You may be assured of confidentiality."

"Our role is to ask questions and listen. We will be presenting a series of 10 or more broad questions that will generate divergent information for the development of a meaningful survey to determine the implementation of the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative. There is sometimes a tendency in sessions like this for some people to talk a lot and some people not to say much. It is important, however, for us to hear from each of you today (tonight) because you all have different experiences and opinions. So if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask for your opinion. We have provided nametags to help us remember each other's names. Our session should last approximately 2 hours. We will have a 10-minute break at the midway point. Refreshments will be available during the break and at the end of the session. If needed, feel to use the facilities at any time."



### OPENING & INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS (Combined)

"With that introduction, let's begin! Let's go around the table and find out more about each other. Please tell us your name and which school you represent. I would also like you to briefly tell us your role in outreach at your school. [Name], let's start with you."

[all participants should share their information]

"Thank you all for sharing that information. Now we will move to our first question and discussion."

### KEY QUESTIONS, ENDING QUESTIONS, AND SUMMARY QUESTIONS

1. What is your perception of the staff/teaching, administration/student relationships/management at the sending and receiving sites?
2. What is your perception of faculty recruitment and incentives for teaching via ITV or off-campus?
3. What is your perception of the student and faculty resources available on campus or off-site for teaching and learning?
4. What is your perception of the application, registration, and financial aid processes?
5. What is your perception of the technical compatibility and upgrades at the distant sites?
6. What is your perception of the learning sites' relationships among each other?
7. What is your perception of the impact of the learning sites' relationships relative to course offerings?
8. What is your perception of the impact of the learning sites' relationships as far as sharing facilities?
9. What is your perception of the impact of the learning sites' budgets on delivery of courses and services to off campus sites?

## FINAL QUESTIONS

1. From our discussions today, what do you consider to be the major barrier or barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?
2. Do you have any additional thoughts that you would like to share regarding barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?

## CLOSING

"Thank you for coming and sharing with us. We will be transcribing and analyzing your observations, comments, and suggestions. We will then use this information to construct an interview guide that will be distributed to all the colleges and universities in Oklahoma. The State Board of Regents will be able to use the information from the interview guide to see how well the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative has been implemented and how the colleges and universities can better meet the challenges of reaching out to communities in Oklahoma. Before you leave, please take a few minutes to visit and enjoy the refreshments."

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Guide

#### Interview Guide for Chief Academic Officers:

1. How are faculty members involved in decision making for your school when it comes to programming?
2. Tell me about how you provide for administrative support services (registering students, collecting tuition and fees, providing bookstore services/distributing learning materials), and student support services at each of your learning sites? How is that staffing different from traditional staffing?
3. How has the Learning Site Initiative impacted the relationships you have with other institutions that may be in your same geographic service area?
4. Could you discuss program review policies and how your institution decides the collaborating efforts with other institutions to develop joint programs, courses, or modules for both distance and on-campus delivery?
5. Could you discuss the kinds of incentives, if any, your institution provides for web course design, course development, or teaching on ITV?
6. What do you consider to be the biggest barrier or barriers to implementing the Oklahoma Learning Site Initiative?

## APPENDIX D

### Amendment

#### ARTICLE XIII-A

##### OKLAHOMA STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Sec,

1. Oklahoma State System of Higher Education.

2. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education--establishment--membership--appointment--terms--vacancy--powers as coordinating board of control.

3. Appropriations--allocation.

4. Co-ordination of private, denominational, and other institutions of higher learning.

§ 1. OKLAHOMA STATE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION--All institutions of higher education supported wholly or in part by direct legislative appropriations shall be integral parts of a unified system to be known as "The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education." Added State Question No. 300, Referendum Petition No. 82. Adopted Special Election March 11, 1941.

§ 2. OKLAHOMA STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION--ESTABLISHMENT--MEMBERSHIP--APPOINTMENT--TERMS--VACANCY--POWERS AS COORDINATING BOARD OF CONTROL.--There is hereby established the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, consisting of nine (9) members, whose qualifications may be prescribed by law. The Board shall consist of nine (9) members appointed by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate, and who shall be removable only for cause, as provided by law for the removal of officers not subject to impeachment. Upon the taking effect of this Article, the Governor shall appoint the said Regents for terms of office as follows: one for a term of one year, one for a term of two years, one for a term of three years, one for a term of four years, one for a term of five years, one for a term of six years, one for a term of seven years, one for a term of eight years, and one for a term of nine years. Any appointment to fill a vacancy shall be for the balance of the term only. Except as above designated, the term of office of said Regents shall be nine years or until their successors are appointed and qualified.

The Regents shall constitute a coordinating board of control for all State institutions described in Section 1 hereof, with the following specific powers: (1) it shall prescribe standards of higher education applicable to each institution; (2) it shall determine the functions and courses of study in each of the institutions to conform to the standards prescribed; (3) it shall grant degrees and other forms of academic recognition for completion of the ,prescribed courses in all of such institutions; (4) it shall recommend to the State Legislature the budget allocations to each institution, and; (5) it shall have the power to recommend to the Legislature proposed fees for all of such institutions, and any such fees shall be effective only within the limits prescribed by the Legislature. Added State Question No. 300, Referendum Petition

No. 82. Adopted Special Election March 11, 1941.

§ 3. APPROPRIATIONS--ALLOCATION.--The appropriations made by the Legislature for all such institutions shall be made in consolidated form without reference to any particular institutions and the Board of Regents herein created shall allocate to each institution according to its needs and functions. Added State Question No. 300, Referendum Petition NO. 82. Adopted Special Election March 11, 1941.

§ 4. CO-ORDINATION OF PRIVATE, DENOT4INATIONAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING.--Private, denominational, and other institutions of higher learning may become coordinated with the State System of Higher Education under regulations set forth by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Added State Question NO. 300, Referendum Petition No. 82. Adopted Special Election March 11, 1941.

#### ARTICLE XIII-B

##### BOARD OF REGENTS OF OKLAHOMA COLLEGES

###### Sec.

1. Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges--creation, members, terms, etc.

2. Powers and duties of Board--officers, supervisors, etc.

3. Successor to existing governing boards--records, papers, etc.

4. Salaries and expenses--allocation of funds for payment.

§ 1. BOARD OF REGENTS OF OKLAHOMA COLLEGES--CREATION, MEMBER, TERMS, ETC.--Section 1. There is hereby created a Board to be known as the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges, and shall consist of nine (9) members to be appointed by the Governor, by and with the consent of the Senate. The Governor shall appoint one (1) member to serve for one (1) year, one (1) member to serve for two (2) years, one (1) member to serve for three (3) years, one (1) member to serve for four (4) years, one (1) member to serve for five (5) years, one (1) member to serve for six (6) years, one (1) member to serve for seven (7) years, one (1) member to serve for eight (8) years, and one (1) member to serve for nine (9) years. Provided that one (1) member shall come from each Congressional District and the ninth (9th) member shall be the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Their successors shall be appointed for a term of nine (9) years, and such appointments shall be made within ninety (90) days after the term expires. Vacancies shall be filled by the Governor within ninety (90) days after the vacancy occurs. Each member of the Board, except the State Superintendent shall receive as compensation the sum of Ten (\$10.00) Dollars per day, not to exceed sixty (60) days in any fiscal year while he is actually engaged in the performance of duties, and he shall also be allowed the necessary travel expenses as approved by the Board and paid in' the manner provided by law. The Board shall elect a president and vice-president who shall perform such duties as the Board directs. No executive board meetings shall be held at any time unless such executive session is ordered by a unanimous vote of the Board. The personnel of the Board of Regents of the Oklahoma Colleges shall not include more than two (2) members from anyone profession, vocation, or occupation. No member of the Board shall be eligible to be an officer, supervisor, president, instructor, or employee of any of the colleges set forth herein within two (2) years from the date of expiration of his term. Any member 'Who fails to attend a board meeting more than two (2) consecutive meetings without the consent of a majority of the Board, his office shall be declared vacant by the Governor and his successor shall be appointed as provided herein. Added State Question No. 328, Referendum Petition No. 93. Adopted special election July

6, 1948.

§ 2. POWERS AND DUTIES OF BOARD--OFFICERS, SUPERVISORS, ETC.--

Section 2. The said Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges shall hereafter have the supervision, management, and control of the following State Colleges: Central State College at Edmond; East Central State College at Ada; Southwestern Institute of Technology at Weatherford; Southeastern State College at Durant; Northwestern State College at Alva, and the Northeastern State College at Tahlequah, and the power to make rules and regulations governing each of said institutions shall hereafter be exercised by and is hereby vested in the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges created by this Act, and said Board shall appoint or hire all necessary officers, supervisors, instructors, and employees for such institutions. Added State Question No. 328, Referendum Petition No. 93. Adopted special election July 6, 1948.

§ 3. SUCCESSOR TO EXISTING GOVERNING BOARDS--RECORDS, PAPERS, ETC.--

Section 3. The Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges shall succeed the present governing board in the management and control of any of the institutions named in the preceding section, and such governing board shall not hereafter have the management or control of any of said institutions. All records, books, papers, and information pertaining to the institutions herein designated shall be transferred to the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges. Added State Question No. 328, Referendum Petition No. 93. Adopted special election July 6, 1948.

§ 4. SALARIES AND EXPENSES--ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR PAYMENT.--

Section 4. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education are hereby authorized to allocate from the funds allocated for the support of its educational institutions named in this Act, funds sufficient for the payment of the per diem and expenses of the members of the Board of Regents of Oklahoma Colleges, the salaries and expenses of the clerical help of said Board; office expense, and other expenses necessary for the proper performance of the duties of said Board. Added State Question No. 328, Referendum Petition No. 93. Adopted special election July 6, 1948.

APPENDIX E

Auditor's Letter

ECU  
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Dr. John A. Bedford,  
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Chair, Education  
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Dr. Sharon Cowan,  
Elementary Education Reading

Dr. William Heitland,  
Counseling

Dr. Bill Osborne,  
Superintendency  
Certification Officer

Dr. Richard Putnam,  
School Psychologist  
School Psychometrist

Dr. Ralph Sharp,  
Elementary Principal  
Secondary Principal

Dr. Carolyn Thomas,  
Library Science

Dr. Allene Warren,  
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Ms. Karen Gallup,  
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April 6, 2004

Ms. Robin Plumb  
ECU Academic Coordinator  
Ardmore Higher Education center  
611 Veterans Blvd  
Ardmore, OK 73401

Dear Ms. Plumb:

Thank you for allowing me to serve as auditor for your qualitative dissertation. It has been a pleasure to review and validate your research in this most important undertaking.

As per our agreement, the audit trail consisted of transcripts of each focus group and individual interviews, as well as notes and summaries completed by the observer. Transcripts and audio recordings were cross-referenced as to accuracy. Notes and coding were reviewed for accuracy and completeness. After careful review of the data collected, coded, and reported in the study, I concluded that the data and its interpretation are based upon the actual interviews conducted rather than the researcher's personal bias and opinions.

I further conclude that all data were accounted for and all reasonable areas were explored. Positive and negative comments, made by the participants have both been included and reported. Triangulation procedures, which included peer debriefing, member checks, and multi-site design enhanced the credibility of the study. The data gathering process, using triangulation, transcripts, categorizing of quotes, congruence of incidents and categories, and researcher objectivity is confirmable, dependable, and credible.

My observation as a result of the audit trail indicates that you have adhered to and maintained a high degree of professionalism as a researcher. Congratulations on conducting such an excellent study which will be beneficial to not only the participants, but to the institutions and the higher education community in the state of Oklahoma.

Sincerely,

John A. Bedford, Ed.D.

VITA  
ROBIN L. PLUMB

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: January 15, 1956 Place of Birth: Wichita Falls, TX Marital Status: Married
Education:	Southeastern Oklahoma State University, Durant, Oklahoma, 1987 B.S., Elementary Education  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 1995 M.Ed., Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2004 Ed.D., Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
Professional Experience:	Teacher (Healdton Middle School) Healdton Public Schools Healdton, OK. 1987-1990  Teacher (Webster Middle School) Oklahoma City Public Schools Oklahoma City, OK. 1990-1993  Academic Advisor/Greenville Coordinator East Tennessee State University Johnson City, TN 1994-1999  Academic Coordinator, East Central University Ardmore, OK. 1999-Present